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THE SCHOOLS OF VEDANTA

BY

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

SIR S. RADHAKRISHNAN



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Dedicated
To
His Highness The Late Maharaja
Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekwar
of
Baroda

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FOREWORD

In this little book Mr. P. NAGARAJA RAO puts up a spirited defence for the study of Philosophy. Science in itself cannot give us a scheme of values and each one of us has his own view of the ends of life though he may not be able to support it by a learned metaphysics. Among the Hindus the values are conveyed through systems of Philosophy which are associated with the three great ācāryas, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. Mr. NAGARAJA RAO gives us here in simple and clear language the central features of the three systems. As an introduction to their detailed study this book will serve a valuable purpose.

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

Benares,
25 July, 1943.

PREFACE

This book was prepared by me as the *Sayaji Rao Fellow* of the University. But for the liberal aid and other facilities extended to me by the Government of Baroda, it would not have been possible for me to have got the book ready for publication. I am deeply grateful to His Highness for graciously allowing me to dedicate the volume to his grand-father, the late Maharaja of Baroda.

In the preparation of the book I have drawn freely from the writings and speeches of my esteemed professor Sir S. RADHAKRISHNAN. For the chapter on Advaita I am deeply indebted to my late Professor S. S. Suryanarayana SASTRI, Reader in Indian Philosophy, University of Madras. My thanks are due to Mahāmahopādhyāya Pandit A. Chinnaswami SASTRIAR for having helped me to read the original texts and works on Vedānta. My thanks are also due to my friend Mr. N. R. BHUVARAHAN, Sub-Editor, *Indian Express*, Madras, and Dr. C. Narayana MENON of the English Department of the Benares Hindu University for having looked through the proofs and made valuable suggestions. I owe the index to Mr. C. G. VISVANATHAN of the Benares Hindu University Library.

My special thanks are due to the authorities of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for having consented to publish this book in these hard and difficult times. The Director and the staff of the Bhavan have helped me considerably in getting the book through the press. My thanks are also due to the editors of the various periodicals for permitting me to use the material that first appeared as articles in their pages; and especially to Śrīmatī Sophia WADIA, Editor of the 'Aryan Path' for her help and suggestions in the preparation of Chapter IV.

Benares Hindu University, }	P. NAGARAJA RAO
10th August, 1943. }	

CHAPTER I

Science and Philosophy

We live in an age the intellectual environment of which is largely determined by science. Science in some manner or other has affected and influenced our world view. The contemporary schools of philosophical thought have found the sanction for their tenets in science. Science has come to stay as the mental diet of our age.

When we talk of science and its impact on society, we have two definite and distinct contributions in view. Scientific technique has helped us to devise ways and means to reduce drudgery, and has knit the universe into a close home. It has created an interdependent world and showered on us manifold advantages. "We can talk across continents and oceans, install television sets in the home, hear Big-Ben striking at North Borneo, make photographs speak and sing, and invent X-rays which are the windows through which we observe and snapshot our insides, roads are made of rubber, crops are ripened by electricity, hair is waved by electric current, distance melts and aeroplanes girdle the earth." In short, science has revolutionised the habits of human life.¹

While all are agreed in praising the benefits of scientific technique, it must be recognised that the scientific technique is subject to one serious limitation. The power with which science has invested us is being used

¹ RUSSELL's *Scientific Outlook*, p. 9. "One hundred and fifty years of science have proved more explosive than five thousand years of pre-scientific culture."

for anti-social ends.¹ We ought not to be indifferent to the goodness and badness of ends. The power derived from science, like all other powers, is neutral, and its ethical character is determined by the end it subserves. The fear of the machine-civilization is not the dread of machinery as such, but the dread of a civilization that is mechanically efficient and ethically indifferent. The machines, which science devised to serve as means to the good life, have usurped the place of the ends. What was merely a camp-follower has come into command of the army. The central defect of modern civilization is that men, instead of using machines as means to a good life, have forgotten the good life in their preoccupation with machinery. An Indian sage is credited with this acid comment: "You can fly in the air like birds and swim in the sea like fishes, but how to live together upon earth you have not yet learnt." Scientific technique would really help mankind, only if it served socially useful ends.

The second contribution of science is the scientific temper of mind. This temper of mind has had great influence on our view of ultimate Reality. The scientist *par excellence* who believes in tangible evidence, and laboratory proof, as the only methods of knowing what exists, does not admit the reality or value of the super-sensuous and the hyper-physical. He believes that the universe has no definite purpose or purposes at heart and does not embody any plan or design. He admits only a chance-world governed by the law of probability. Human life on this planet is pointless for him. Life is merely a collocation of atoms or cells. It is a bye-product of the

¹ It is difficult to improve on H. G. WELLS's comment: "The superman made the aeroplane and the ape in man has got hold of it."

material process. Human beings are the latest products in the evolutionary process. "Man is resolved into a few pounds of carbon, a few quarts of water, some lime, a little phosphorus and sulphur, a pinch of iron and silicon, a handful of mixed salts scattered and recombined." The freedom of the human will is a myth. The universe with man in it is definitely controlled by scientific laws. The mind of man is treated as an attenuated form of matter. The character, the cut and the colour of a man are determined by the relative functions of his glands. They hold that the disorders of the pituitary may lead to crime and iodine supplied to the thyroid transforms a cretinous idiot into a healthy child. Mechanistic physics and determinist psychologies affirm the faith of the unrepentant scientist. To the impenitent scientist what cannot be weighed and measured does not exist. To him truth is relative, values are subjective, and morality is only an expediency. He believes in a rigid universe and hopes to give a mathematical account of everything in it. Modern Physics and modern Biology do still believe largely in a determinist universe. Purposivism, in Biology and indeterminism in Physics are doctrines accepted only by a few. Lancelot HOGBEN speaking to the British Association of Science, Cape Town, gives expression to the vision and hope of the scientist in the following words: "The modern mechanist does not say that love and heroism do not exist, but he says, Show me the behaviour to which you apply the adjectives 'thoughtful', 'loving' or 'heroic' and we will one fine day endeavour to arrive at predictable conclusions with reference to it, following the only method of enquiry which we have learnt by experience to trust."¹

¹ Lancelot HOGBEN: *Dangerous Thoughts*.

The central malady of civilisation, according to the diagnosis of this school of scientists is the lack of scientific spirit or rationalism. A rationalistic approach to life will engender a class of men who will have the necessary scientific frame of mind to run the affairs of the universe intelligently. The need of the world is to rationalise our emotions. John DEWEY¹ the representative of this view observes "It is our human intelligence and our human courage which is on trial; it is incredible that men who have brought the technique of physical discovery, invention and use to such a pitch of perfection will abdicate in the face of the infinitely more important human problem. What stands in the way is a lot of outworn traditions, moth eaten slogans and catchwords that do substitute duty for thought, as well as our entrenched predatory self-interest. We shall only make a real beginning in intelligent thought when we cease mouthing platitudes... just as soon as we begin to use knowledge and skill we have, to control social consequences in the interest of a shared, abundant and secured life, we shall cease to complain of the backwardness of our social knowledge." The solution to the world's troubles consists in psycho-analysing men adequately and giving them economic competence. Marxism and Psycho-analysis are the gospels of the age. While attributing (quite rightly) the evils of the world to poverty, malnutrition, foul air, etc., to which an unjust social order condemns a majority of its members, they carry on, in the interests of rationality, a deep denigration of religion. They belittle the value of religion on the ground of its inability to change the sorry state of things obtaining in the world. Their

¹ John DEWEY's *Philosophy and Civilisation*, p. 329.

road to the new world-order is active revolution, directed towards the re-defining of class-relationship. Hence they are sceptical of philosophies being derived from science. The distinguished director of the Cavendish Laboratory, the late Lord RUTHERFORD, is reported¹ have said, 'Don't let me catch anyone talking about the universe in my laboratory.' That is the index of his hearty distrust of philosophy.

II

The less dogmatic variety of scientists, those who exhibit the scientific temper at its best, have felt shy of the extravagant claims of science. Bertrand RUSSELL is the chief spokesman of this class of scientists. Science, he says, should avoid the threefold defects of the ordinary knowledge, viz., cocksureness, self-contradictoriness and vagueness. Science at best enables us to give sufficiently probable results and not absolutely certain truths. Science is not final. The jurisdiction of science is limited. It can only tackle what is determinable in terms of quantity. What the scientist cannot measure, is not necessarily non-existent. Reality as such contains much more than what science can know. The intuitions of value, the significance of love, the irresistible attraction of beauty, etc., cannot be known by the methods of science¹. Science has to forge new instruments to deal with these aspects of reality. The non-existence of instruments should never lead to the ignoring of those entities. The scientist abstracts only the mathematically determinable element. The scientifically indeterminable

¹ For a clear account of the effect of a religion without dogmas see Bertrand RUSSELL's article on 'The essence of religion', *Hibbert Journal*, October 1912.

elements go under the name of *values* (Truth, Beauty and Goodness). Values, according to the scientific humanist are ways of feeling. Their existence is granted but not their metaphysical ultimacy.¹

The plenary purpose of science, according to the master scientists, is not the manipulating knowledge we have about a thing. Such knowledge gives us power over a thing and we go on perpetually meddling with it. Possession of power begets love of greater power. The power impulse is the source of corruption. "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely", wrote ACTON in his epitaph on human history. "All Great Men" he added, "are bad". There is a way of knowing a thing in a manner other than the manipulative fashion. That method gives us the contemplative type of knowledge. It produces in us an attitude of mind, which gives us a feeling of ecstasy. Science, in fact, began with that function. The ancient bards of Greece treated Nature as their bride. The contemplative type of knowledge gives a frame of mind which can be characterised as humanistic. The sober calculations of Mathematics and Physics drive home the limitations under which the human being has to live in this world. The human being knows very well that the stamp of mortality is set on everything human. Still he feels that man, though an "impotent crawling creature in this petty planet" is still free in the field of thought to create and cherish ideals. It is out of this vision and freedom that man has created the world of art, literature and science. This is what RUSSELL characterises as the *Free-man's worship*. Human life is something definite which has to be lived in the light of these values. GALSWORTHY gives

¹ RUSSELL'S *Scientific Outlook*, ch. XVII: 'Science and Values'.

expression to this view of life in the following telling words: "In this incomprehensible world full of the savage and the stupid and the suffering, with monstrous contrasts and the most queer happenings, we ought not to fly to another world for compensation. We should never lose even in tragedy that unconscious rapture and pre-possession with that entrancing occupation which we call life." We must say "Sufficient unto the earth is the beauty and the meaning thereof".

The conclusion that the mere increase of scientific knowledge is not enough for progress is accepted by many scientists. The increase in knowledge must go together with wisdom. Wisdom (*jñāna*) is the right conception of the ends of life. Science no doubt is a very important and necessary ingredient that promotes the progress of civilisation. As an ingredient of civilisation it is good, as the sole driving force it is disastrous. The scientific outlook is admirable when kept within limits. It should not be allowed to thwart the major impulses of man which give value to life.

III

A great many European Philosophers of today have directed their attention to the study of the philosophy of values. A considerable part of modern literature on philosophy is an enquiry into the metaphysical status and import of the three great traditional values: Truth, Beauty and Goodness.¹

These value-philosophies point out the serious limitations of science and hold the view that science tells us "little about some things, and there is nothing about

¹ N. HARTMANN'S three volumes on *Ethics* is the most substantial contribution made to the study of values in recent years.

which it tells everything". The immeasurable and the indeterminable in reality are not tackled by science. It cannot explain the nature of the human mind. Human mind is purposive and science deals only with mechanistic causation. It has no use for teleology. Science cannot provide reasons for the "why" of phenomena. It, in short, describes and does not explain. Explanation implies purpose. Purpose has ceased to be a scientific concept. The very presupposition of science is the mechanical mode of treating factors. It proceeds on the assumption that every event is mechanically caused by the preceding events or set of events. It cannot countenance the arbitrary introduction of purpose and goal. The scientific scheme is defective, because it leaves out of account Mind and Values.

Any attempt at an interpretation of Reality must be in terms of principles other than nature. Prof. A. N. WHITEHEAD, has pointed out conclusively the defects of a total scientific interpretation of Reality. He states that the notion of force or stress as something which operates between bodies is fundamental in the scheme of Newtonian Physics. For example the Newtonian scheme does not tell us why there should be stress, or why force should operate. The motion of bodies, Newton pointed, is governed by certain laws such as the law of gravitation. The motion may not be arbitrary but the laws that govern them are arbitrary. There is nothing to account why they should be what they are and not otherwise. These facts point out that a few bits of matter moving in space cannot furnish reason for their existence. The central defect of science, stated in the words of WHITEHEAD is that "Newton in discovering the laws which governed the movements of matter, while leaving the

laws themselves as arbitrary, unexplained facts, illustrated a great philosophical truth that a dead Nature can give no reason. All ultimate reasons are in terms of aim at Value ".¹

Further, WHITEHEAD holds that the scientific scheme excludes purpose and values ; so it is not able to give a full and clear explanation of Reality.

The logical principles, of science such as, induction, the Law of Contradiction, and other mathematical principles have to be explained in terms other than scientific categories. Sense perception does not provide the data for their interpretation. This necessitates the assumption of values and mind.²

The limitations of science and its methods have led to the re-interpretation of Reality. Reality for the value-philosophers consists not only of objects that are known through the methods of science but also of objects that are intuited. The intuited objects are values. They are Truth, Beauty and Goodness. They are upheld as ultimate and not instrumental. They are objective and not subjective. They are aspects of Reality, that have to be intuited. Plato described them as Forms. Scientific methods do not help us to intuit them.

The contemporary mood is expressing itself in the denial of values. Values are denounced as figments of our imagination. Truth along with other values is treated as a subjective hallucination. Their reality is refuted because they are not visible and tangible. The moral value, Good, is explained in terms of convenience, utility and pleasurable sensation. The relativists hold

¹ A. N. WHITEHEAD's *Modes of Thought*, pp. 183-185.

² Prof. C. E. M. JOAD's *Philosophy for our times*, Chapter IV, V and VI.

with Hamlet that there is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so. Beauty is explained as a matter of taste. The idea of God in religion is interpreted as a hope created by man to mitigate his loneliness. HUXLEY once called God "a sensation in the pit of the stomach hyposatisfied".

Such a subjectivist account of values is neither correct nor socially helpful. The doubting and discrediting of values is symptomatic of the decay of civilization. Those who believe in the existence of values have taken great pains to establish the objective and intrinsic nature of values. The proof for the existence of the objectivity of values is not conclusive. But the dangers of subjectivism are a legion. "The statement or the truth, if we call it such, that all truths are subjective is itself subjective." The mere presence of the enormous diversity of opinions about the beauty of a picture is regarded by some as an argument in favour of the subjective view. It is not so. Everybody does differentiate between a good and a better picture. Further it is absurd to assess beauty by counting heads. Why should beauty, as a quality belonging to a thing be denied, when other qualities like weight, volume etc. are not denied? Why should this quality alone be a projection of the human mind, and why should the others inhere in the objects? The subjectivist view of values logically leads to solipsism. Inter-subjective intercourse is enough evidence against solipsism. Solipsism suggests that we know only our own mental states, a conclusion revolting to commonsense. These facts point out that the values, Truth, Beauty and Goodness are intrinsic and are not the projections of the human wishes. They are an aspect of Reality. Their value is intrinsic and not instrumental. The poet-philoso-

sopher, Wordsworth has condemned the prosaic or scientific attempt to analyse Beauty:—"Our meddling intellect misshapes the beauteous forms of things; we murder to dissect".¹

Goodness the chief moral value, is explained in terms of social approval and individual expediency. The Good is not an instrumental value as it is mistaken to be. There are no doubt a great many values that are instrumental, such as, health, wealth and power.

The chief bar to the acceptance of the ultimate nature of the values is Hedonism. Hedonism holds the view that the only value man pursues is pleasure. Pleasure in some form or other is the main-spring of human activity. Men seek pleasure sometimes with a long-term view. That is why they sacrifice the immediate pleasures and put up with a little discomfort for a time. The apparent altruistic activities and martyrdoms are interpreted in this light by the Hedonists.

John Stuart MILL introduced some refinement in the doctrine of Hedonism. He introduced differences in the qualities of pleasure. He said it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied.

Before establishing the ultimate nature of values one has necessarily to refute the hedonist doctrine in its various forms.² If hedonism is valid, the ultimate value will be pleasure. No direct disproof of this doctrine is possible, but a little introspection would show the weakness of this position.³ We do not always act after

¹ Prof. C. E. M. JOAD's *Return to Philosophy*, Chap. III.

² Prof. C. E. M. JOAD's *Philosophy for our Times*, Chap. XI.

³ See Kāṭha Upaniṣad, Chap. II, vv. 1 and 2. Pleasure cannot gratify us, because the appetite grows with what it feeds. First we take to indulgence to get pleasure. Later on we take to it to allay the craving and hankering. Hence the Upaniṣadic advice to choose *Śreyas* and not *Preyas*.

balancing the results of the alternative courses of action in terms of pleasure. We most often act on impulse. Further we desire specific ends other than pleasure. Pleasure results as a consequence. The Hedonist theory puts the cart before the horse. We desire other specific things and pleasure accrues later on. Pleasure or happiness is a by-product. It is not an end pursued directly. The qualitative element introduced by MILL is ambiguous. What is a high quality pleasure? Certainly it is not more intense pleasure, because such a position would only be equivalent to greater quantity of pleasure. The distinction sought to be maintained disappears. The word "high" introduces some standard other than pleasure. Happiness, in the words of Aldous HUXLEY, is like coke, something you get as a by-product in the process of making something else. Aristotle defined happiness as the bloom on the cheek of a young man. Happiness will elude you, if you seek it. "It is like a flower that surprises you, a song which you hear as you pass the hedge, rising suddenly."

Once pleasure is proved to be a by-product and not an ultimate value, the traditional values, Truth, Beauty and Goodness, emerge as intrinsic, objective and ultimate. These values are said to be many by the modern pluralist philosophers. The intuition of these values is said to result in a state of mind which is held to be the ideal of human life.¹

Christianity in the West and the theistic schools of Vedānta in India have regarded the *deity* as the greatest value. In the deity the traditional values are said to be

¹ For a clear account of the objectivity and ultimate nature of values, see Prof. JOAD'S *Philosophical interpretation of Modern Science*, Chap. X.

concretised. According to Rāmānuja, the greatest theologian of India, "The Lord is the abode of an infinite number of auspicious attributes" and fellowship with him (mokṣa) is the supreme value of life.

Saṅkarādvaita in the East and Absolutism in the West hold that the supreme value is Brahman. The conscious realisation of the true nature of the self, which is apparently individualised into different centres on account of the functioning of nescience (māyā) is the supreme value of life. Modern Philosophically-minded scientists have found that science has led them to the realisation and affirmed the existence of this great value, i. e. Brahman experience. Prof. EDDINGTON holds the view that Physics gives us knowledge, not of things in themselves but of the responses which are made to things by various measuring machines. The subject-matter of exact science consists of pointer-readings and similar indications. The scientific picture of the universe does not conform to the objects in the external world. The world-picture depicted by Physics is a world of symbols. "Science has nothing to say about the intrinsic nature of the atom. The atom like everything else is a 'schedule of pointer-readings'." The real background is the spiritual substratum¹. The knowledge that science gives us about the external world is the result of the interpretation of the human mind of the data received through the senses. There is an element of construction. Science gives us a knowledge of the external world, as construed and constructed by the human mind. EDDINGTON says that the scientific view of the world is a type of selective-subjectivist view. These serious limitations do not warrant the dogmatic assertion of the realist philosopher that the

¹ A. N. WHITEHEAD *Science and the Modern World*, pp. 68-69.

external world is objectively real. It is the efficiency of the human mind that is responsible for the picture of the external world described by the scientists. Prof. A. N. WHITEHEAD writes "Nature gets credit, which should, in truth, be reserved for ourselves, the rose for its scent, the nightingale for its song and the sun for its radiance. The poets are entirely mistaken. They should address their lyrics to themselves and should turn them into odes of self-congratulation on the excellence of the human mind."¹ The Advaita Philosophy of Śaṅkara does not merely stop with the plurality of selves but tries to explain the plurality as due to the cosmic delusion (māyā) and transcends the limitations of an "affirmative theology." It sees the greatest value in the one Brahman without a second. It is the value of values and the truth of truths. It is the secondless entity. It is existence, knowledge and bliss.

To the Hindu the metaphysical values are conveyed through systems of Philosophy which are associated with the three great ācāryas Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva.

¹ For a complete exposition of EDDINGTON's views see his *The Nature of Physical World*, and for his systematic theory, see *The Philosophy of Physical Science*.

CHAPTER II

Resume of Indian Philosophy

The great contribution of India to world thought is its philosophy and religion, the twin-passions of the Hindu mind. For over a period of four thousand years, unaffected by any outside influence, the ancient Indian seers developed their speculative powers and erected different systems of philosophy. The study of the rich intellectual and spiritual heritage they have left us will greatly help us in confronting and negotiating the difficulties we are up against in the present crisis of our civilisation. The study of the spiritual adventure of the prophets of Egypt, sages of China and seers of India is not in any sense less important than that of Isaiah, Paul, Socrates and Spinoza. The neglect of such a rich heritage, in the words of Prof. RADHAKRISHNAN is an academic error and failure of perspective.¹ The literature on Indian philosophy is vast and complex. It ranges from irritatingly brief aphorisms to elaborate dialectics.

Indian philosophical thought can be classified into different systems. Besides the six systems of philosophy (Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta) which go under the name of darśanas, there are other systems for example Buddhism, Jainism, and Materialism (lokāyata school known also as, Cārvāka darśanas). Most of the systems have grown and developed on different lines at the hands of the various philoso-

¹ RADHAKRISHNAN's *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 20.

phers. Buddhism developed into four different lines and Vedānta into three. The very enumeration of the names of the systems and their several ramifications point to the rich and diverse nature of Indian philosophic thought. Max MULLER observes,¹ "If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and found solution of some of them, which will deserve the attention of even those who studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India..... They are the makers of marvellous mythologies, the inventors of the most subtle philosophy and the givers of the most elaborate laws."

In this introductory essay to the study of the systems of Indian philosophy, we have to take note of the general characteristics underlying the different systems. Philosophy in general is an intellectual construction of Reality. Man does not rest satisfied until he gets a clear and a definite view of the Universe in which he lives and his place in it. He weaves different theories about it, some comforting him and others explaining his helplessness. To philosophise is the very nature of man. "It is only animals that are not metaphysical", said HEGEL. The different philosophical systems of the West, aim at explaining Reality after the logical manner. They make magnificent intellectual efforts to map out Reality and give us a neat theory of it. Their quest is for a comprehensive and non-contradictory account of Reality. Unlike the scientist who studies only that fragment of Reality which is quantitatively determinable and practically useful, the philosopher studies the entire Reality. The Philosopher does not seek comfort and security but Truth. F. H. BRADLEY observes that the

¹ Max MULLER's essay *What India can teach*.

search for Truth is a necessity of their (philosophers') nature. In philosophy we must not seek for absolute satisfaction It is the exercise and enjoyment of but one side of our nature.¹ We do not stop short of Truth. Truth is an intrinsic value. Intellectual satisfaction helps us to get over this discomfort. Modern attempts at system building are examples of the triumph of the speculative in man. The philosophical systems of WHITEHEAD, ALEXANDER and McTAGGART are instances of the daring expressions of the philosophical spirit and dialectical skill. Philosophy according to them is only concerned with the task of revealing Truth. It has nothing to do with the salvation of man. Prof. R. G. COLLINGWOOD, in his autobiography tells us that "the Oxford Philosophers were proud to have excogitated a philosophy, so pure from the sordid taint of utility, that they could lay their hands on their heart and say it was of no use at all—philosophy so scientific that no one whose life was not a life of pure research could appreciate it and so abstruse that only a whole-time student and a clever man at that could understand it. They were quite resigned to the contempt of fools and amateurs." In Prof. HOGBENS's words, they turn out to be a tribe of elegantly useless men whose efficiency consists in the verbal clarity of obscure discoveries. They believed, unlike NEWMAN, that we can save our souls by smart syllogisms.

The Indian philosophical systems, though they soar to great metaphysical heights and exhibit power of argumentation, are not still to be construed as the results of the logical in man. They are not attempts, primarily to satisfy the rational curiosity of man. They hold that all

¹ F. H. BRADLEY, *Essays on Truth and Reality*, p. 13.

values—Truth, Beauty and Goodness are instrumental and not intrinsic. To them philosophy is a science of the soul (*ātma vidyā*). Salvation is the value of values, all other values are subordinate to it.¹ Philosophy to them is a way of life and not a view of life. It helps men to terminate the misery in life.² It originated under the pressure of a practical need arising from the presence of moral and physical evils in this life. An escape from it is possible only through a science of Reality. Philosophy is the science which teaches us the means of vanquishing suffering *once and for all*.³ Physical disease can be cured by medicine, strong cocktail can calm our nerves, a love affair might drive off our depression, enemies can be circumvented by diplomacy, poverty can be cured by making a packet of money and spirits can be won over by charms. But all these remedies are shortlived and double-edged. We cannot prevent the recurrence of the troubles once for all. It is an attempt to seek something permanent and avoid the flux of births and deaths. It helps us not merely to reveal Truth but increases virtue. It awakens our loyalties. It extends our minds and taps our energies and helps us to realise the vision of God. Hence philosophy is pragmatic. It is a saving-knowledge and not subtle metaphysics. It is the practical aim of philosophy that is responsible for the blend of the religious and philosophical in Indian systems. The great Truths of religion in the last analysis are realised through the strength of our entire being. A rational explanation of the ultimate religious ideals is attempted in

¹ See *Āpastamba Sūtras* I, 22, 2, '*ātma lābhāt na param vidyate*'.

² See *Chāndogya*, Chap. 7, 1, 3, '*tarati śokaṁ ātma vit*'.

³ When PLOTINUS was asked 'What is philosophy?' he answered, 'what matters most'.

philosophy. The religious ideal is not treated merely as a "facile intuition based on scriptural declaration" indemonstrable in terms of logical moulds. Nor have they made the unscientific effort to explain everything in terms of reason and measurement. They have combined in a judicious manner, faith as well as reason. They have brought to bear an "attitude of trust tempered by criticism". They have not accepted all that is in scriptures; only the purportful part is accepted. Nor have they held that "what science cannot teach mankind cannot learn".¹ The attitude of criticism is not silenced but is kept in limits. They have marked out clearly the different "universes of discourse".

The Indian systems never forgot the necessity of changing the unregenerate man and his ways in order to enable him to realise the religious ideal. Religion according to them is "a system of education by means of which human beings must train themselves, first to make desirable changes in their own personalities". Every system lays down a suitable course of practical discipline for the attainment of liberation. Good life is the prerequisite of godly life. Most systems with the exception of materialism hold the view that human beings in their unregenerate form cannot attain liberation. The common discipline prescribed is detachment. Most men and women love above all the pleasures of a life of mental indolence, they are torn by passions and weakened by distractions. The yoga system of Patañjali gives an elaborate account of the ways and means of getting over distractions. Distraction cuts us away from the pursuit of the goal. It is the imbecile aspect in men that is responsible for distractions. It is again distractions and passion that make

¹ Bertrand RUSSELL, *Science and Religion*, p. 243.

us fly into popular political movements, go mountain climbing or big game hunting. Goodness involves one pointedness. To act in a perfectly ethical way we need detachment. Disinterestedness helps us to break our unregenerate self-hood. "This self-hood (ahamkāra) constitutes the most heavy and hardly translucent substance which cuts off most of the light of Reality and distorts what little it permits to pass".¹ The Indian systems hold that renunciation is essential. They insist on training and regulating the natural instincts of men. For a spiritual life there is no aid but perpetual vigilance. We must be sentinels for ever on guard against the stratagems of Satan.

The doctrine of detachment has taken two lines of development. Some have laid great stress on the negative aspect of renunciation, hence they have advocated the giving up of all worldly activities. This represents the absolute *saṁnyāsin's* ideal, involving the cessation of all activities.

But with the advance of time specially in the *Gītā* the negative aspect of renunciation is interpreted afresh.² It is not the giving up of all activities, but the performance of all in a spirit of detachment from the things of the world and attachment to God. It is not world-renunciation that *saṁnyāsa* advocates but the renunciation of the sense of agency and the fruit of actions. The detachment taught by the *Gītā* is not stoicism for it involves attachment to God. The *Gītā* insists on a life of activity performed as an offering to God devoid of the sense of agency and the desire for the fruit. It is this positive ideal of *saṁnyāsa* that has informed the doctrines of all

¹ A. HUXLEY, *Grey Eminence*, p. 55-59.

² *Gītā*, Chap. III, v. 4, Chap. XVIII, vv. 2 and 7.

the modern Hindu thinkers like Mahatma GANDHI, TAGORE, RADHAKRISHNAN, Śrī AUROBINDO and Dayananda SARASVATI. It is this aspect of the *Gītā* that is responsible for the active social ethics of the Hindus.

The six systems of Indian philosophy have some ideas in common. All of them are agreed in postulating a definite philosophical ideal to be realised by man. Attainment of that ideal is *mokṣa*. The concept of *mokṣa* (liberation) differs from system to system. But they are all agreed in pointing out that the liberated soul is free from suffering, mental and physical. Further, the liberated souls are free from births and deaths.

Every system lays down a definite course of discipline as necessary for the attainment of *mokṣa*. The discipline recognises, the need for the cultivation of virtues, social and individual, active disinterested service to society, and uninterrupted, singular, and complete devotion and surrender to God. Some systems like the Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya and Mīmāṃsā are frankly atheistic, and do without the grace of the Lord.¹ They believe that salvation is the recovery by the soul of its natural integrity. The recovery is effected by an unremitting moral life, and not by divine grace. The Nyāya and the Vedānta believe in the existence of God and the need of His grace for salvation. The Yoga system suggests devotion to God, as an alternative method, to attain *mokṣa* along with the practice of *Yoga*.

The systems in general accept not less than three instruments of knowledge—perception, inference, and verbal testimony. Most of them have given the place of primacy to scripture. All of them have developed

¹ Kumāṛila's school does not admit the existence of God. Prabhākara admits the existence not only of God but gods.

their own individual theories of knowledge. Each system has discussed the meaning of the term knowledge and the ways of attaining it. They have formulated the criteria of validity and invalidity of knowledge. They have left no problem of epistemology undiscussed. Most systems to the present day use the logical terminology forged by the Nyāya system.

All the systems believe that the universe is a cosmos, but not a chaos. They postulate a central moral purpose as governing the universe. The universe is a moral order. There is a point in human life and purpose in the heart of the universe. The good that we do in this life is not without its reward. The evil takes its due toll from man. The universe is law abiding to the core. Moral life has its own purpose. As a corollary to this the systems postulate rebirth as well as pre-existence.¹ They subscribe to the inevitable law of *karma*. Karma points out that the individual is responsible for his acts and not a mysterious fate. The conditions of life are determined but not the will of the agent. The law of Karma applies to the conditions that are being determined and not to the agent. Most systems believe in a heaven

¹ The Late Prof. G. Lowes DICKINSON observes :

Human optimism is doomed, unless we believe that there is more significance in individual lives than appears on the surface, that there is a destiny reserved for them more august than that which they can attain in their life of three score years and ten. Nobody could hold that life on this earth is so transcendently good that it deserves in itself, without reference to anything beyond to be supported and perpetuated with delight. It may be held by a few fortunate and unimaginative souls, but it will not commend itself to the enlightened understanding. Too few of us surely attain the good even of which we are capable, too many are capable of too little; and all are capable for a short time.

and a hell where the individual soul gets his rewards and punishments.

Some systems, notably the Vedānta, envisage the possibility of liberation (mokṣa) in this very life (jīvan mukti). Such a concept has been possible for the Advaita-vedāntin because of his unique conception of mokṣa. The realisation of the true nature of one's own self is mokṣa. According to Śaṅkara, the individual soul deludes itself into the belief that it is a separate existing entity with manifold limitations, on account of the functioning of māyā. Māyā is that delusion which is responsible for the feeling of individual plural selves. With the knowledge, that in reality the individual soul is non-different from Brahman, this separatist delusion is destroyed and the soul realises that it is not the limited empirical self but Brahman. The prime cause of this realisation is knowledge and not the path of karma.

The different systems of Indian philosophy can be construed as steps leading to the philosophy of Vedānta. Vedānta in some form or other is the living religion of the Hindus. The view that the various systems represent a hierarchy leading to Vedānta secures the synoptic view. Such a view goes against the relative independence of the different systems. Every system states *in extenso* the positions of the rival schools and refutes them elaborately. Each of them has a long line of development explaining the different doctrines of the systems.

Of the six, the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika go together. They represent the pluralistic and realistic phase of Indian philosophic thought. The great contribution of the Nyāya system is its elaborate organon of critical and

scientific investigation. All the problems pertaining to the theory of knowledge have been stated with remarkable clarity in an analytical fashion.¹ The several instruments of knowledge (pramāṇas) together with the possible pitfalls and fallacies have been set forth in a lucid manner. The Nyāya scheme of categories has supplied the Indian thinkers, through centuries, with the means of discriminating, quickly and surely the true from the false inferences. Traditional students of Indian philosophy hold that the study of the Nyāya system is indispensable to the study of all the other systems. On the philosophical side the school admits the existence of Matter, a plurality of souls, and God. All of them are co-existent. A thorough knowledge of the sixteen categories of the Nyāya system together with an unremitting moral life secures salvation for the soul. God in the Nyāya system is established through the aid of inference² and the scriptures are defended as valid because they are the written words of the Lord. Matter in its ultimate form *i. e.* atoms, is the material and God the efficient cause of the universe. Liberation consists in the attainment of an unperturbed *equipoise* free from delights and sorrows. The stoic nature of the liberated soul is inert like a stone.

The Vaiśeṣika system is more a physicist's than a metaphysician's account of Reality. Reality is construed as coming under eight categories. The study of the eight categories and the constituents of the universe constitutes the chief doctrines of the system.³ The atomic

¹ See S. C. CHATTERJEE's *Nyāya Theory of Knowledge* and Mm. S. KUPPUSWAMI SASTRI's *A Primer of Indian Logic*.

² See Udayana's *Nyāya Kusumāñjali*.

³ See A. B. KEITH's *Indian Logic and Atomism*; J. C. CHATTERJI's *Hindu Realism*.

theory of the Vaiśeṣikas is the first scientific account of Matter we come across. Early Vaiśeṣikas do not admit the existence of God. They are more analytical and scientific than philosophical. They represent the radical pluralistic element in Indian thought. They stress the many in the one.

The Sāṅkhya is the most artistic of the systems. They postulate a plurality of souls and an inert, undifferentiated Matter (*prakṛti*). They were the first to discover that movement, life and intelligent action are not the results of the mechanical processes of *Prakṛti*. They postulated evolution as resulting from the identification of the soul with Matter. The entire Universe is treated as the result of the evolution of *Prakṛti*. Twenty-three evolutes are recounted. The sorrows of men are attributed to the erroneous identification of the *Puruṣa* (soul) with the workings of *Prakṛti* (Matter). The discriminative knowledge that *Prakṛti* (Matter), alone evolves and that *Puruṣa* is like the lotus untouched by water, brings about salvation. Right knowledge is the means to liberation. The system finds no necessity for accepting God. The liberated soul is free from sorrows. The sāṅkhya system represents the dualistic phase of Indian thought.¹

The yoga system of Patañjali accepts the metaphysics of the Sāṅkhya system and its ideal. The discriminatory knowledge of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, Patañjali holds, can be secured by the practice of the eightfold system of yoga. It consists in the cultivation of virtues, physical and mental. Practice in the exercise of the control of breath and withdrawal from sense objects lead to constant,

¹ See Prof. S. S. SASTRI's translation of Sāṅkhya *Kārikā* (3rd edition.)

uninterrupted meditation. Yogic experience is the final illumination of the philosophic truth. As an alternative to Yoga, devotion to Lord also is indicated. God in the Yoga system is only a perfected human being. He is not the creator and sustainer of the Universe. The great lesson of Yoga to our distracted and war-shattered world is the lesson of the value of peace. Yoga points out that there are a great many faculties in man to which he can have access provided he makes the effort. Extraordinary powers of certain individuals for clairvoyance and telepathy are not anything external to man. They are the unawakened faculties in each of us. Yoga helps us to exploit and explore the great psychical capacities of men.¹

The Mīmāṃsā system of Jaimini is the most elaborate of the systems. It represents the school of ethical idealism. It does not find any necessity for accepting God. To the Mīmāṃsakas revealed scripture is eternal and not composed by any being. They believe that the universe is a moral order completely determined and governed by the vedic deities. Every act is said to produce merit, if it is good, and demerit if it is bad. The several acts of men create an unseen potency called *adr̥ṣṭa*, which rewards men with heaven and punishes them with hell. They hold that life is governed by action and reaction. This system is highly utilitarian and is based on the theory of rewards and punishments.²

¹ See Miss G. COSTER'S *Yoga and Western Psychology* and Prof. S. N. DASGUPTA'S *The study of Patañjali Yoga Philosophy and Religion*.

² For a comprehensive account of the system see Sir Ganganath JHA'S Posthumous work *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* edited by Sir S. RADHAKRISHNAN, Vol. I of the Library of Indian Philosophy and Religion.

CHAPTER III

The Philosophy of Śaṅkara

What is living and vital in Indian Philosophy to-day is the vedānta system. The other systems of Philosophy are mainly read as accessories to the study of the vedānta. The term vedānta means the concluding portions of the vedas. Each veda is divided into three distinct parts. The *mantras* are the invocatory hymns addressed to the several deities presiding over the elements of nature, e. g., Agni, Vāyu, etc.; the *brāhmaṇas* the treatises that prescribe in detail the mode of performing sacrifices, the arrangement of the objects used in the sacrifices and their description. The *Upaniṣads* are the metaphysical speculations embodying the vital truths of the vedas. They are the spiritual treasures of India.

The most reputed school of the Vedānta is the advaita popularised by Śaṅkara. The school of Vedānta elaborated by Śaṅkara has influenced world thought to a considerable extent. "The German renaissance represented by SCHOPENHAUER, HARTMANN and NIETZSCHE, the American renaissance represented by EMERSON, and Walt WHITMAN, the Irish renaissance in the persons of W. B. YEATES, G. W. RUSSELL and George MOORE, have been definitely influenced by Śaṅkara's thought". Śaṅkara in the words of S. RADHAKRISHNAN has combined the positive aspect of the Upaniṣadic teaching with the negative logic of the Buddhists. This metaphysical system is artistic in its structure and irrefutable in its logic. In accordance with tradition, Śaṅkara has relied for the doctrines of his system on the triple texts, the Gītā, the Vedānta Sūtras and the

Upaniṣads. He points out that the central purport of the triple text is the non-difference of the individual soul from Brahman.

The greatest work of Śaṅkara is the celebrated commentary on the vedānta sūtras. Tradition reports, and from the several accounts of the life of Śaṅkara we gather, that he finished writing all his works before he was hardly thirty. The commentary is at once a philosophical classic and a piece of great literature. His commentaries on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣads* discuss in detail many an important doctrine of advaita.

The doctrines enunciated by Śaṅkara in his commentary have been elaborately commented on by a host of post-Śaṅkara scholars. Some of the doctrines of Śaṅkara have been defended *in extenso* and others amplified. Critics have found fault with the Hindu habit of writing commentaries and sub-commentaries on the ground that it has not contributed to the development of original thought. Such a criticism is unwarranted and opposed to facts. "No one who reads the lengthy discussions of the nature and function of psychosis, or the dialectics of difference or the inferential establishment of nescience (*māyā*) will continue to believe that there has been no progress in the development of Hindu thought." Post-Śaṅkara dialecticians with an unswerving loyalty to their master have established beyond dispute, the manifold doctrines of advaita. A close study of the advaita dialectics will lead us to the clear conclusion that advaita is not a "facile intuition based on scriptural declarations and mystical experiences, but a cogent intellectual system".

Before Śaṅkara there were two great advaita teachers Gauḍapāda and Maṇḍana. The advaita system is

found in some form in Gauḍapāda's Kārikās on the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. Śaṅkara has commented on Gauḍapāda's work.

Maṇḍana has worked out a system of advaita in his *Brahma Siddhi*.¹ He is considered by some scholars to be an elder contemporary of Śaṅkara. He has contributed a great deal to advaita dialectics. Many a commentator of Śaṅkara has drawn heavily on Maṇḍana.

II

The advent of Śaṅkara is a landmark in the history of Indian Philosophic thought. In him it attains great heights. Of all the systems of Indian Philosophy Śaṅkara's is the most logical. Once we grant the postulates of the system there is nothing to grumble at or resent in the detailed exposition of the doctrines of the system.

Śaṅkara throughout his exposition sought to refute two positions: (a) the sāṅkhyan doctrine of transformation (pariṇāmavāda) and (b) the Mīmāṃsā doctrine of ritualism. The Sāṅkhyas are of opinion that the Upaniṣads countenance a dualistic metaphysics, of spirits (puruṣas) on one side, and matter (prakṛti) on the other. The Mīmāṃsakas are of opinion that the essential teaching of the veda is contained in the *brāhmaṇas* and not in the *upaniṣads*. They uphold the doctrine that salvation through ceremonial acts is the central purport of the vedas. They further point out that the self spoken of in the Upaniṣads refers to the performer of the rites and ceremonies. Action (karma) and not Brahman, is the quintessence of the Upaniṣads.²

¹ See S. Kuppaswami SASTRI's, Introduction to his edition of *Brahma Siddhi*.

² Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, I, 1, 3 and 4.

Śaṅkara has criticised *in extenso* the Mīmāṃsā position. He points out that the brāhmaṇas and the *Upaniṣads* refer to two entirely distinct aspects. The *Upaniṣads* are the most important and purportful part of the vedas. The purport of the *Upaniṣads* is not karma but Brahman. They point out to us the mode of realising the self which is Brahman. The *brāhmaṇas* and the mantras are secondary in their significance. They are not organically and directly connected with the theme of the *Upaniṣads*. The *Pūrva mīmāṃsā* has nothing to do with the *Uttara mīmāṃsā*. Ceremonial purity and ethical excellence may at best help the spiritual aspirant but will not directly result in self-realisation. They are not the substitutes for Brahman. Brahman can only be realised by *jñāna* i.e. by Brahman-intuition (*sākṣātkāra*) but not by mere intellectual knowledge.

Further Śaṅkara points out that Brahman is not the void of the Buddhists. The Brahman of Śaṅkara is the Reality; but for it there would be nothing. It is the substrate underlying the whole world of phenomena. Spiritual realisation affirms the real through the negation of the phenomenal. The advaitin denies only names and forms but not that which appears under their guise. The reality of the substrate is affirmed but not as a substrate. The advaitin negates only distinction (*bheda*), the Buddhist negates distinction as well as the distincts. To the Buddhists there is nothing permanent and stable underlying the flux of the universe. This position of the Buddhists is refuted by Śaṅkara elaborately in his commentary on the second chapter of the vedānta sūtras.¹

¹ For the refutation of Sāṅkhya position see Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, chap. II, 1 to 10 sūtras; for refutation of Buddhism, chap. II, 18 to 32 sūtras.

The central Reality, Brahman is posited by scripture and is realised by the Self. It is of great interest to note here that some of our modern interpreters of the advaita Vedānta have tried to equate advaita and Buddhism. They point out that Buddhism is not nihilism. Prof. RADHAKRISHNAN has consistently maintained that the Buddha could by no possible means have preached an arid and barren nihilism to the folk of his day. It is psychologically impossible to believe that Buddha should have enjoyed the popular veneration he did if he had really preached nihilism. The professor concludes that Buddha did affirm a central Reality and negated only the phenomenal selves. The silence of Buddha is a classical illustration of the truth that final truths cannot be expressed in words: to take Buddha to be a nihilist is to mistake his true philosophical stature¹.

The competent European critic of Buddhism, Mrs Rhys DAVIDS, till the other day disagreed with the positive interpretation of Buddhism. In her recent book *Advanced Manual of Buddhism* she has come round to the view that Buddha's teaching is not nihilistic. Svami VIVEKANANDA suggested that Buddhism was not entirely anti-Hindu. Mahatma GANDHI in his inspiring address to the Buddhists of Colombo pointed out that the teaching of Buddha formed an integral part of Hinduism. He observed that what passes as Buddhism today was not an essential part of Buddha's life and his teachings. Buddha never rejected Hinduism or its central reality, whatever be the truth in the modern belief that Buddha, was a Hindu seer, no support for it could be found in the writings of Śaṅkara and his followers, who were there

¹ S. RADHAKRISHNAN's British Academy lecture, *Gautama the Buddha*.

concerned to stress their departure from Buddhism and not their affinities to it. For similar reasons no weight need be attached to the appellation 'Buddhism in disguise' which was applied to Śaṅkara by his opponents. He broadened its base and gave it a new life and a new interpretation.

III

Brahman is the central Reality of Advaita. It is the supreme spirit, consciousness and intelligence. Revealed scripture is the final authority for the existence of Brahman.¹ Brahman is not an object of knowledge it is knowledge itself. There is nothing besides it. It cannot be described in terms of any object other than itself. It is not a relatum in the relational process of knowledge. It cannot be the content of any cognition without losing its self-hood. It is self-manifest and self-luminous. The instruments of knowledge (pramāṇas) can only negatively indicate what Brahman is. There is no knowing Brahman but only being Brahman. It can only be known in the non-relational form. Brahman knowledge is experience attained by disciplined souls who have purified their minds by the performance of the duties laid down in the scriptures. Brahman is the one without a second.

The establishment of Brahman on the authority of scripture appears unphilosophical at first sight, but in reality it is not so.² Supreme authority is claimed not for the entire veda, but only for certain significant parts.³

¹ *Vedānta Sūtra*, 1, 1, 3.

² Prof. S. S. SASTRI, cf. *Introduction to Bhāmatī*, T.P.H., pp. 13-15.

³ *Tātparyavatī* ḥi śrutiḥ pratyakṣād balavatī, na śrutimātram *Bhāmatī*, p. 15.

In determining which parts are authoritative, the science of interpretation adopts certain determinative marks of purport.¹ They are, the agreement of the initial and the concluding passages, repetition, novelty, fruitfulness, glorification by eulogistic passages, and condemnation by the deprecatory passages, and intelligibility in the light of reasoning. Reason, (this determinative mark of purport), plays a more important part than is formally avowed. In fact reason steps in at every stage. When we have to settle the introductory and the concluding passages reason has to help us to distinguish the primary and the secondary passages. It is again reason that has to point out which repetition is purportful and which not. The really novel is to be ascertained by reason. So the authoritarianism of advaita is only unphilosophical on the face of it, because the role of reason in the interpretation of scripture is most prominent.

IV

Brahman according to advaita is not the Creator of the Universe in the sense that a potter is the maker of the pot. Nor is creation an emanation from nothing. Out of the non-existence nothing can be created. The Nyāya school holds the view that the effect is non-existent prior to its creation. They hold that the effect is *de novo*. The sāṅkhyaś criticise the Nyāya position, in detail and hold that effect is pre-figured in the cause. They maintain that an absolutely non-existent effect cannot be brought in by any agency "any more than a thousand crafts-men could turn blue into yellow or extract oil from sand". One who wishes

¹ "Upakramo 'pasamhārāv 'abhyāso 'pūrvatā phalam, arthavādo 'papatti ca liṅgam tātparya-nirṇaye".

to produce a particular effect seeks the appropriate material cause; e. g., one who wants curd seeks milk and not water. Further there is the question, "Is there a time interval between cause and effect?" If there is, does the cause wholly cease to exist, before the effect comes into being? In that case, the immediate antecedent of the product would be a non-existence; and though we may in speech distinguish the non-existence of x from the non-existence of y , there is in reality no way of distinguishing one non-existence from another. Again if the produced effect is *de novo* then any effect may follow from any cause.¹

Śaṅkara has great sympathy with the sāṅkhya criticism of the nyāya position. But he did not rest there. The sāṅkhyan doctrine of cause, *satkāryavāda*, fares no better than the nyāya theory at the hands of Śaṅkara. The argument is as follows:—Granting that the effect is the manifestation of the cause, before the manifestation, was the effect existent or not? If it was already existent, then the causal operation becomes superfluous. If it is not existent, then there will have to be a cause for the manifestation and that in its turn will need another cause. Thus there is infinite regress. The sāṅkhyan concept when pressed to its limits leads us to the advaita conclusion. Śaṅkara makes the Sāṅkhyan view the jumping board for his theory, i. e. that the relation of cause and effect are not ultimately real.²

¹ Prof. S. S. SASTRI's article on 'Advaita, Causality and Human Freedom,' *I. H. Q.* Vol. XVI. 1940, and see—*Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, v. 10.

² "Vivarta vādasya hi pūrvabhūmiḥ Vedānta vāde Pariṇāma vādaḥ", Sarvajñātman's *Saṅkṣepa-śārīraka* II, 61.

The advaitin's explanation of cause and effect relation is that they are appearances of the same Reality. The causal relationship exists as between the substrate and the superimposed e. g., the rope and the snake. It is not, as the anti-phenomenalists think, as ultimately real as Brahman. "It is a product of nescience, and as long as we live in a world of nescience, we have no right to impugn causality." It is as objective as the world is ; even for the transcendence of nescience, we depend on this concept, since we have to depend on means, like instruction, reflection, contemplation etc. If these were not well-settled causes they could not be depended on by us in our laudable endeavour to realise ourselves. The advaitins admit "that causal rigidity in the empirical world is consistent with the denial of causality in the transcendental world".¹

V

The advaitin describes Brahman in a negative manner and finds support for it in the *upanisads*. The entire advaita dialectics rests on two general postulates (a) the absolutely real is never sublated, (b) the absolutely unreal is never cognised. The example for the absolutely real is Brahman. The examples for the absolutely unrels are the barren woman's son and the horns of a hare. In between these two categories the whole world of plurality is caught up. The whole world of plurality which we perceive, manipulate and live in, is neither real nor unreal. In deep sleep we experience the sublation of the pluralistic universe. Being sublated it is not real ; neither is it unreal because it is cognised, nor

¹ Prof. S. S. SASTRI's article on 'Advaita causality and Human Freedom.' *I. H. Q.* Vol. II.

is it real and unreal because such a definition violates the Law of Contradiction. It is this indeterminable nature (*anirvācyatvam*) of the Universe that is connoted by the term *māyā*.

According to the advaitin the very mechanism of finite knowledge with all its categories is only applicable to the sphere of the indeterminable. Brahman cannot adequately be known by these finite categories. The absolutely real Brahman loses its self-hood when it becomes an object of relational knowledge. So no predication in respect of Brahman is intelligible, because there is nothing real besides it. The Upaniṣadic description of Brahman in terms of knowledge, bliss and infinitude should be interpreted as excluding their opposites, the unreal, inert and the finite. Brahman does not possess knowledge, bliss and infinitude. He is knowledge-bliss and infinitude. The import of propositions in respect of Brahman is identity and not predication. It is the native weakness of finite cognition to compare the infinite and refer to it in terms of the finite. It is meaningless to refer to Brahman as the Good or the Truthful. It is the final Truth and the final Good and we cannot refer to it in terms of any other thing. He is perfect; there can be no progress for the perfect. Progress and perfection are in Brahman and not of Brahman. Brahman does not admit of substrate-attribute relation. It does not admit of the relation between the part and the whole. It is the end as well as the means. It is spoken of as the *impartite*—(*akhaṇḍa*). It is these logical difficulties that have prevented Saṅkara from thinking of the highest Reality in terms of personality.

“The affirmative theology” of the other schools of the vedānta in their anxiety to bring the Absolute into relation

with the relative makes the Absolute itself relative. Those schools conceive of God as a supra-person, creator, sustainer etc., of the Universe.

The belief that the ultimate reality is a personal God with virtues and powers for ill, produces not very desirable moral qualities in the worshipper. Aldous HUXLEY observes that the Hebrew concept of God as a magnified human person with human passions is not morally the best ideal. He is represented as wrathful, jealous and vindictive. This being so the devotees too tend to be like that. This fanaticism has resulted in burning the witches and tormenting heretics. Personality and individuality are in the last resort a limitation and hinder the spirit of the unitary consciousness. 'Belief in a personal moral God has led only too frequently to theoretical dogmatism and practical intolerance. In the name of the divine moral men have committed many an atrocity.'¹

The traditional arguments put forward to establish a personal God as the ultimate Reality are not convincing. The causal argument is not conclusive because the category of cause itself is unintelligible in the last resort.² The design argument establishes God as a mechanic limited by the material with which he has to work. It does not rule out the possibility of a plurality of designers. The moral argument that God somehow brings about the wedlock of happiness and virtue turns out to be a

¹ HUXLEY, *Ends and Means*, pp. 272-84.

² If the world needs a cause for its origination then the God who creates it also must have cause.

Further to admit a cause for the existence of God lands us consequently in *infinite regress*. To exempt God from the law is to deny the universality of the Law.

If it be urged that God is uncaused, so too is the world.

case of wishful thinking. So the central reality cannot be a personal God.

VI

The Universe of plurality on the advaita hypothesis is neither created by Brahman, nor is it a transformation of Brahman. It is an illusory manifestation of Brahman. The central problem of advaita is: how does this illusory manifestation take place and why does it take place? The straight answer to this question is the inexplicable knotty expression, *māyā*, i. e., nescience. It is this nescience that is responsible for the plurality we perceive. It has two functions. It obscures the substrate, i. e., Brahman and projects in its place the world of plurality. In the words of Prof. HIRIYANNA "suppression precedes substitution". This nescience is indeterminable. Finite cognition, the categories of such cognition, the instruments of human knowledge, the import of scriptural statements, are all products of nescience. It is represented as a positive beginningless entity which is sublatale. It is called *adhyāsa* (superimposition). Śaṅkara describes it at great length in his introduction to the commentary on the Vedānta-sūtras. There he points out with great persuasive skill, and striking cogency that the entire social intercourse of men. (lokavyavahāra) presupposes nescience. It is the fact of everyday experience. Though our true *self* is Brahman, still on account of nescience, we super-impose the ills of the body on the self. When the body is ill we say "we are ill", when the body lacks the sense of hearing we say "we are deaf". Thus there is confusion between the self and the not-self. Unless we super-impose ourselves on our sense-organs, we cannot become knowing subjects. The knowing subjects need sense

organs to know the things about us. Knowledge pre-supposes a knowing subject, a known object, and the means of knowledge. All these are not possible without the assumption of reciprocal super-imposition of the self with the not-self and *vice versa*. It is this nescience that is the cause of all trouble.¹

The advaitin's concept of nescience has been submitted to a great deal of criticism. The *Law of the excluded middle* is the tool with which the advaitin is attacked. The world is spoken of by the advaitin as illusory. Is that illusion illusory? If the illusoriness of the Universe is itself an illusion, then the world becomes real, because of the cancellation of the two negations. If the illusoriness of the Universe is real there is contradiction for the advaita doctrine that there is only one Category. The resourceful advaitin finds his way out of this dilemma. He does say that the illusoriness of the universe is illusory. The nerve of his argument is as follows: The difficulty seems to arise from the fact that a qualification can apply only to something other than itself, not both to itself and others. Illusoriness is a qualification we predicate and the subject of the predicate cannot itself be illusory. The illusory illusion must be real. But surely nothing can be farther from truth. The illusoriness of the illusion is a paradox but it is no greater paradox than the affirmation of the reality of the real.²

Our very knowledge is a paradox for the following reasons. We cannot have the knowledge of the unknown, since there can be no activity in respect of what is not known, nor can knowledge be of the known. If it be

¹ Śaṅkara's *Adhyāsabhāṣya*.

² Prof. S. S. SASTRI, *Introduction to Siddhāntaleśa-saṅgraha*, Vol. I, pp. 48-51.

contended that it is of the partly known, then does the cognitive activity apply to the known part, or the unknown? In either case, we have the same old difficulty. Because of this we have to recognise the paradox of knowledge.¹ Further it is plain to us that there is at the root of finite cognition a core of irreducible unintelligibility. We conclude that the relational knowledge of the finite is not perfect and it is only an appearance of perfect knowledge. Because of this central paradox in all finite activity there is an irreducible unintelligibility in it. So the advaitin does not commit himself to any definite description about the nature of the world of plurality. He does not recklessly repudiate. His is not an attitude of blind faith or blank negation. He is scientific in his suspense of judgment in the absence of evidence. By the very use of the categories of logic he points out the rift in its lute. The great lesson of advaita logic is that it exposes the clayfooted nature of logic and points out that she is not the Madonna of Thought that the Nyāya school imagines her to be. The advaitin is not out to demonstrate this or that position. He points out that every other position held by the opponent is untenable. They are left with the witness of the condemnation. The definitions and proofs attempted by the advaitin are only a concession to the clamour of the dualistic mode of expression.²

¹ Prof. S. S. SASTRI, Principal Miller Lectures, *Advaita and the Concept of Progress*, 1937, pp. 14-15.

² Prof. S. S. SASTRI, 'Advaitavidyāmukura,' *J. O. R.*, Vol. 10 p. 286.

'na hy asmābhir mithyātvam anyad vā kiñcin nirūpaṇīyam asti. Param nirūpyamāṇa prapañca khaṇḍanenaiva vāyam hi acaritārthāḥ. Tatra, tatra lakṣaṇā-' bhidānam tu para buddhyanurāñjanāya.

Another usual objection raised against nescience is based on its practical efficiency. The objection is as follows: nescience is described by the advaitin as indeterminable. How can the indeterminable be practically efficient? The advaitin's reply is that practical efficiency belongs only to the indeterminable and to nothing else. Practical efficiency cannot belong to Brahman who is the Absolute, real, pure, perfect and free from changes. It is only that which is short of such a reality that can have practical efficiency.

How can the cognition generated by the nescience tainted *pramāṇa* lead us to Brahman intuition? To this the answer is that error is oftentimes the gateway to truth. A false instrument of knowledge can help us to cognise a real object. The phenomenal *pramāṇas* can point to the Noumenal Reality. In the world of scientific thought we find that erroneous hypotheses lead us to valid theories. So the illusory nature of the *pramāṇa* is no obstacle for us to know the truth. Just as the bamboo in the forest, which lights up the whole forest, burns itself out along with the forest, the final intuition destroys the world of plurality as well as itself. The image of a person reflected in a mirror is not real but still it serves as a means for showing us the merits or defects in our face. Error and delusion have their own utility.

VII

The two realms set out by advaita, namely the Phenomenal and the Noumenal, must somehow be shown to constitute an integral unity. Without such a synoptic view it would be unintelligible to maintain that the world is an illusory manifestation of Brahman. Traditional writers on advaita metaphysics seem to hold the view that the final intuition annuls the whole world of Reality.

They say that the world of plurality is sublated by Brahman intuition. The sublation is something like the sublation of the dream experience by the waking life. Such an interpretation establishes no continuity between the Phenomenal and the Noumenal. Professor S. S. SASTRI in his Presidential Address to the Philosophy and Religion Section of the All-India Oriental Conference, 1937, suggested that sublation should be interpreted as sublimation and transcendence and not as annulment. If we stick to the doctrine of annulment, we shall not be able to account for the continuity between the phenomenal and the noumenal. "From the empirical to the real, from the appearance to the Absolute, a passage is either possible or is not ; if not, the Absolutist Philosophy is an irrelevant nightmare." "Reality and existence" says RADHAKRISHNAN "are not to be set against each other as metaphysical contraries. Nothing on earth is utterly perfect or without perfection." The existing objects of the world of plurality cannot commit suicide and go into nothing. This is avoided by adopting the suggestion namely sublimation in the place of annulment. The objects of the world of plurality and the subject who knows them on the empirical plane are transformed and sublimated by the Brahman-intuition. This suggestion points out a continuity between the Phenomenal and the Noumenal. So "sublation is sublimation" and not annulment.

The relation between the world of plurality and Brahman has to be understood with great care. In one sense Brahman is the cause of the world of plurality. But for him the world of plurality will not be there. The advaitin does not assert the non-otherness of effect from cause; he does not however assert their identity in such wise as to deduce for the effect the reality of the cause :

the negation of otherness amounts only to this—the effect has no reality other than that of the cause.¹ It is because of this non-otherness of the effect from the cause that the *Upaniṣads* declare that by knowing one Brahman we know all the things of the world. According to one school of advaita nescience is the cause for the world of plurality. Some others hold the view that *Iśvara* (Brahman qualified or delimited by *māyā*) is the prime cause of the world of plurality. *Māyā* is given a secondary place. But all the schools are agreed that the world of plurality is no other than Brahman and it is its illusory manifestation.

VIII

An extreme view of advaita is that there is only one-nescience and that nescience reflects Brahman and as soon as that reflected soul attains release there is destruction of the nescience. On this view there exists only one soul. The presence of other souls bound as well as released, is compared to the dreams of that single soul.

Such a radical solipsist position is not acceptable to the majority of the advaitins. Besides scripture declares that there are released as well as bound souls. So a plurality of nesciences is posited. It is the difference between the various nesciences that accounts for the variety of individuals. The experience that we are finite selves is known to us only through the conflict and the contrast with other selves. The conflict presupposes a plurality of empirical selves. Śaṅkara in his commentary while speaking about the reciprocal super-imposition of the self and the not-self, significantly refers to the not-

¹ Na khalv ananyatvam ity abhedam brūmaḥ, kiṃ tu bhedam vyāśedhāmaḥ—*Bhāmātī* II, i, 14,

self as 'thou' and not as 'it' or 'that'. Such a significant usage helps us to infer that Saṅkara was in favour of a plurality of souls. The school that holds that there is only one soul is of opinion that Brahman is the locus as well as the content of the nescience. Nescience cannot be located in an inert entity. It must have pure consciousness for its locus as well as its content. This school of advaita goes by the name of *ekajīvanāda*.

The majority of advaitins posit a plurality of nesciences. The content of nescience is Brahman and its locus is the *jīva*. It may be objected that souls cannot come into existence without the functioning of nescience and nescience cannot therefore be located in its own product, the soul. Thus the charge of reciprocal dependence is levelled against the advaitin. The advaitin finds a way out of this muddle by positing the beginningless nature of the interaction of the nescience and *jīvahood*. He says that there was no time when there was no *jīva* or nescience.

If it be still urged that such a relation of dependence between nescience and *jīva* is un-intelligible the resolute advaitin admits the charge. It is the very nature of nescience to be ultimately unintelligible. Why expect intelligibility in the case of nescience when it is proclaimed to be indeterminable?¹ Though nescience is located in the *jīva* it does not belong to *jīva*; its content is *Īśvara*. Ignorance or nescience may be located in me and still I may not be its controller. The empirical usage that ignorance belongs to me is figurative. The conditioned absolute, i. e., *Īśvara*, is the controller (the arch-juggler of nescience). He creates the whole Universe

¹ *durghaṭatvam avidyāyāḥ bhūṣaṇam na tu dūṣaṇam. Katham
cit ghaṭamānatve avidyātvam durghaṭam bhavet—Iṣṭasiddhi of
Vimuktātman.*

with nescience as its material cause. The individual soul does not create the Universe. Nescience is thus established to be bi-polar.

Besides the pure Brahman which is the ground as well as the goal of existence, advaita tradition admits the existence of a personal God Īśvara. The God of religion comes in between the empirical selves and the transcendental Brahman. All the scriptural passages that enumerate the function of the Lord refer to Īśvara. Worship of this *Saguṇa Brahman* is insisted on as a stage on the road to realisation.

It is wrong to hold as some do that the Īśvara of advaita is on no higher plane than the nescience ridden individual self. Without the grace of the Lord nay, not even an inclination towards the non-dualist frame of mind is possible.¹ Madhusūdana in concluding his monumental work *Advaita Siddhi* stresses his irresistible love for a personal God in the form of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He says "with flute in hand, of the hue of a fresh (water laden) cloud dressed in yellow silk, of lip red like *bimba* fruit, of face charming like the moon and eyes like lotus—beyond this Kṛṣṇa, I know not of any truth."²

The God of advaita does not act from any selfish motives. It is His *līlā* (sport). Creation is the overflow of his goodness. He is not subject to the limitations of *māyā* as the ordinary soul. *Māyā* is the energy and he is the energiser. If we do not admit the

¹ Śrī Harṣa's *Khaṇḍana-khaṇḍa-khāḍya* 'Īśvarānugrahādeva Pūṃsām advaita vāsanā', Chap. 1, v. 21.

² Vamśīvibhūṣita karāt navaṇīradābhāt
Pīṭambarāt aruṇabimba phalādharoṣṭhāt
Pūrṇendu sundara mukhāt aravinda netrāt
Kṛṣṇāt param kimapi tattvam ahaṁ na jāne.

existence of God, we will not be able to account for the existence of the world. Reality is not less, but more than God; not by eschewing God, but by realising and transcending Him can we realise self, for the world is God-dependent; and to ignore God may well lead to asserting itself as if independent, and weighing us down, as in *samsāra*; release requires therefore the realisation, first of the dependence of the world on God, and then of God being an appearance of Brahman.¹

Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* points out that the 'unconditional self, being beyond speech and mind, undifferentiated and one is designated as "not this, not this". When it has the limiting adjuncts of the body and organs which are characterised by imperfect knowledge, desire and work it is called the empirical individual self. When the self has the limitations of creative Power manifesting through eternal and unlimited knowledge, it is called the *antaryāmin* (inner ruler). The same self, as by its nature transcendent, absolute, and pure, is called the immutable supreme self.²

The reflection theory holds the view that Brahman reflected in *māyā* is *Īśvara*. The *jīvas* in this view are reflections of Brahman in *avidyā*. The difference between the two reflecting media is, that one is predominantly pure *sattva*, and another impure *sattva*. *Māyā* is predominantly pure *sattva* and *avidyā* is impure *sattva*. This view reduces *Īśvara* also to a reflection on the analogy of individual souls.

There is another view which establishes an organic relation between *jīva* and *Īśvara*. The nescience has for

¹ S. S. SASTRI's *Śaṅkarācārya*, pp. 96-97.

² Śaṅkara on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* III, 8, 12; S. RADHAKRISHNAN's *Eastern religions and Western Thought*, p. 29.

its content *Īśvara*, and its locus is *jīva*. When the individual soul's nescience is removed, he becomes one with *Īśvara* and not Brahman. It is only when all the souls transcend their respective nesciences there is the realisation of Brahman: at that stage *Īśvara* automatically ceases to exist. The *jīvas* are the reflections of *Īśvara*. If it be contended that nescience has no quality or visible form and that reflection for it is impossible, the advaitin explains it with the help of an analogy. Just as ether which is infinite and all-pervasive seems confined in objects like a pot, the *jīva* is the delimited form of Brahman. This is called the *avaccheda* view. This view helps us to establish an intelligible connection between the *jīva* and *Īśvara* and also accords with the declaration of scripture relating to the existence of the released and unreleased souls.¹

IX

The central import of Advaita is the identity of the individual soul and Brahman. The category of difference is refuted in detail.² Advaita repudiates the common-sense view that normal sense perception gives us a world of separate individual existents. The so-called individual separate existents are neither separate nor independent. The separate individual existent is the result of a network of forces mental and material. Their individuality is only an abstraction from Reality. The things we ordinarily call objects or individuals like man, table, tree, are not realities as the romantic anti-rationalist or the superficial realist would

¹ Prof. S. S. SASTRI, Introduction to the *Siddhānta-leśa Saṅgraha*, pp. 39-42.

² Prof. S. S. SASTRI, *Introduction to Bhāmati*.

have us believe. They are appearances of Reality. There is a comprehensive ignorance of which we partake and it is this ignorance that is responsible for our view that we are separate individuals. The scientific view is a partial view. It has abstracted a portion of Reality which is mathematically determinable. The scientist's picture of the Universe proves to be a private Universe. The other aspects of Reality which do not submit to mathematical treatment are left out as meaningless. The scientist does not possess instruments to deal with those aspects of Reality. Hence he mistakes the partial reality abstracted from the true as the real.

Maṇḍana, the great advaita thinker, with unsurpassed logical acumen, has discussed the dialectic of difference. The advaitin has pressed to his service all the *pramāṇas* to yield the central doctrine of advaita, the identity of Brahman and the individual self.

Scripture is the central *pramāṇa* for advaita in the establishment of the identity of the individual self and Brahman. Maṇḍana points out that scripture declares the identity in unequivocal terms. Scripture no doubt has to be interpreted according to the determinative marks of purport. The famous *Chāndogya Śruti* points out and identifies the reality of Brahman with the self, *that thou art* (*tattvamasi*). This teaching is repeated ninefold to show that it is important and that it is its primary purport. This identity with Brahman is not known, through ordinary experience as the heat of fire, or the price of bread. So the scriptural declaration is not a mere re-statement. It is fruitful because the knowledge of identity helps us to pass beyond the travail of transmigration. The knowledge of this identity is praised and its opposite deprecated. It also stands

to reason. The rigorous application of the determinative marks of purport points out that the central truth of the *Śrutis* is identity.

There are several passages in the Upaniṣads which point out difference as the central purport of the *Śrutis*. They refer to a radical difference between Brahman and the individual. The advaitin explains these passages as elaborating the phenomenal view-point to be refuted later. The *bheda-śruti* (scriptural statements that have difference for their purport) are refuted ultimately by purportful *identity-śruti*.

The great Maṇḍana says that perception is not opposed to the advaita doctrine. Apparently perception gives us a world of plurality. It is the first and the primary instrument of knowledge, From this it does not follow that perception is an unsublatable *pramāṇa*. It may be the first instrument of knowledge but by no means is it basic. Scriptural knowledge arises by sublating the cognition derived through perception. Hence the knowledge derived through perception is sublated by the knowledge arising from a subsequent *Pramāṇa*.

Maṇḍana points out that perception does not cognise difference. The summary of his argument is as follows : Difference is a relation. It needs two relata for its existence. Is difference the nature of the things? Or is it an attribute of them? If it were the nature of the things, there would be no things to be different. If anyone were to point out a single entity, that would break itself into a number of things because of difference being its nature. Thus the process would go on endlessly and it would not even rest with the primal atom. So difference cannot be the nature of things.

Nor can difference be the attribute of the relata. If difference is the attribute of the things, then is the attribute different from its substrate? Or is it of its very nature? If the attribute is different from the substrate we have three units (1) the substrate, (2) the difference which is its attribute, and (3) the difference of the attribute from the substrate. Once we start the enquiry into the relation of this difference to the substrate on the one hand and the attribute on the other we are condemned to infinite regress. Thus the category of difference turns out to be ultimately unintelligible. At best it can give us appearance and not truth. To use the words of BRADLEY it is a make-shift, it is a device, a mere practical compromise most necessary but in the end most indefensible.¹

The advaitin does not rest satisfied with the refutation of the category of difference. Those who reject difference take to the fascinating doctrine of the *concrete universal*. The Advaitin refutes that also in detail. The Absolute of advaita transcends the *concrete universal*. In our common experience we find identity and difference co-exist. The mere fact of their apparent synthesis does not warrant their ultimate reality. The existent is not always the real. The categories accepted by finite cognition are by no means critical. To see that identity and difference co-exist is not to take them to be real. "A crown and bracelet, it is said, are different and yet not different, different as products but not different in respect of their material cause, i. e., gold. But if they are really non-different, he who wants a crown must be satisfied with a bracelet. If we maintain that there is a difference between a crown and a bracelet, then

¹ BRADLEY, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 33.

there must be difference between the bracelet and gold also, because crown and gold are non-different. Because of the difference between the crown and bracelet he who wants the first does not want the second. Why should it not be that he wants it too because of this non-difference?"¹ Such in bare outline is the critique of identity in difference. Identity in difference turns out only to be a device resulting in self-deception through insufficient analysis.

The path to reach the Absolute can be represented in the form of a dialectical formula. *Adhyāropāpavādābhyām niṣprapañcam prapañcyate*. It is a dialectical process whereby the distinctionlessness of the indeterminate cognition passes over into the cognition of difference and then transcends itself in the distinctionless intuition that is Brahman. There is first the superimposition of plurality on Brahman and then it is sublated. Super-imposition and sublation are the two acts that lead the advaitin to *mokṣa*. "To ignore the world is not identical with being ignorant of it."² There is no short cut to realisation excepting through the super-imposition and the withdrawal thereof. The spirit must go forth and come back with enriched experience. It must know the perils and pass through the 'vale of tears' and must learn 'the art of soul-making'.

X

The spiritual aspirant has necessarily to undergo the moral training imposed by scriptures. Advaitins are of opinion that ethical excellence and ceremonial purity are

¹ Prof. S. S. SASTRI, Introduction to *Bhāmatī*, pp. 19-21.

² Prof. S. S. SASTRI, *Advaita and the Concept of Progress*, pp. 18-19.

not directly contributory to spiritual realisation. But morality and ritual help the soul to acquire the calmness necessary for Vedāntic study. Śaṅkara in his commentary has laid down the prerequisites for vedāntic enquiry. They are: the discrimination of the fleeting from the permanent, non-attachment to results here and hereafter, the qualities of calmness, equanimity and contentment, etc., and the desire for release. Ethical excellence is a necessary step for the advaitin on his path to perfection. The spiritual aspirant has necessarily to cultivate *vairāgya* (detachment). The doctrine of non-attachment presupposes the cultivation of positive practical virtues. This grand ideal of non-attachment has been systematically preached in all the systems of Indian philosophy. Without non-attachment concentration on the spiritual Reality is impossible. The great philosophers of the west have not cultivated this detachment. Aldous HUXLEY points out that the biographies of the great metaphysicians of the west often make extremely depressing reading. Spite, envy and vanity are too frequently manifested by these professed lovers of wisdom. Some are not even immune from the most childish animalism. NIETZSCHE's biographers record that at the time when he was writing his *Superman* he was unable to control his appetite for jam and pastry. In his mountain retreat when a hamper of good things arrived for him, he would eat and eat until he had to go to bed with a bilious attack. KANT had a similar passion for crystallised fruit and along with it such an abhorrence for sickness and death that he refused to visit his friends when they were ill, or even to speak of them once they had died. Besides, KANT claimed an infallibility for his metaphysics and identified the limits of philosophy with his thought.

These great western thinkers were intelligent in relation to the not-self and were ignorant of the self.

The advaitin on the other hand, points out that ethical excellence is the first step for spiritual realisation. A careful discriminative wisdom results in the attachment to Brahman and detachment from the perishing and the illusory. After acquiring the necessary moral excellence the aspirant takes to uninterrupted meditation and contemplation solely of the scripture-taught real. Meditation is the technique of mysticism. It is the method of acquiring knowledge of the most essential nature of things. Such uninterrupted contemplation leads to the final intuition i. e., *Brahmasākṣātkāra*. This final intuition is the central fact of religion. "To develop this spiritual dimension we have to withdraw our souls from the flux of existence, endure an agony of experience, or travel, barren and stormy wastes of despair. When once this consciousness arises pride, prejudice and privilege fall and a new delight is born in the soul."¹ This mystic experience is possible for one and all of us if we strive for it.

The unrepentant rationalist might object to the validity of mystic experience. It is impossible for the deaf to form any idea of music. To an Indian, European orchestral music is intolerably noisy, compli-

¹ S. RADHAKRISHNAN, Lecture on *The Supreme spiritual ideal—the Hindu View* (World Congress of Faiths). Aldous HUXLEY raises the question; 'what use is mysticism' where it is alive? The answer to that question he proceeds to say 'is that where there is no vision, the people perish; and if those who are the salt of the earth lose their savour, there is nothing there to keep the earth disinfected, nothing to prevent it from falling into decay. The mystics are the channels through which a little of knowledge filters down into our universe of ignorance and illusion. A totally unmystical world would be a world totally blind and insane'. *Grey eminence*.

cated and over-intellectual. To him it is no music but only an elaborate cacophony. "Of the significant and pleasurable experiences of life only the simplest are open indiscriminately to all." The other pleasures cannot be had except by those who have undergone a suitable training. One must be trained even to enjoy the pleasures of alcohol and tobacco. First whisky seems revolting. First pipes turn even the strongest of boyish stomachs. Similarly, first Shakespeare's sonnets seem meaningless and the differential equation sheer torture. From this it is clear that 'training' is necessary for experiencing religious feeling. We must develop that dimension in us.¹

The final intuition results according to one school of advaita from the non-dual texts and according to another is perceived by the internal organ, *manas*. It is a non-relational type of knowledge. It is an immediate experience. It is just like the indeterminate cognition of a child in the pre-relational stage. Two elements are common between the child's pre-relational cognition and Brahman intuition. They are, immediacy and the non-attributive nature of the cognition. The child's cognition returns to relational level as it grows but Brahman intuition never returns to relational level.

XI

The final realisation is not anything novel. It is the realisation of the potential nature of the spirit. It is just like laying one's hands on the forgotten ornament round one's own neck. This realisation of advaita is not

¹ A fashionable lady who knew she had as good eyes as anyone looking at one of TURNER'S great painting 'The Sun set', turned round to him and remarked with polite reproof, "you know Mr. TURNER, I never see sun set like that". His reply is instructive to purblind protestors. "D'ont you wish you did, Madame?"

intended for a few or a clique only. It is not the close preserve of the intellectual. The realisation of the advaitin does not result through mere intellectualism. If Śaṅkara denied the Sūdra and women the eligibility for the study of the Vedānta he did it in accordance with contemporary motives, which included an active faith in rebirth. Śaṅkara did not seek to exclude them from Brahman-realisation but pointed out for them other easier means than the study of the Vedānta. The path to spiritual realisation is not one mechanical road for all. All the buds do not give rise to the same flower. Different spiritual aspirants follow different techniques.

The advaita conception of *mokṣa* is unique. It is not derived from the grace of an external God. It is *native* to the soul and is not *derivative*. It is not produced. It is something that is there awaiting self-discovery. The logical consequents of such a view are the doctrines of universal salvation and the concept of *Jīvanmukti* (liberation in the embodied state).

Advaita posits realisation as possible for all. There is no eternal damnation for any soul. Release being the manifestation of one's own nature and nothing adventitious, it cannot be denied or withheld from any. It is the birthright of every soul. Universal salvation is not only a possibility but a logical necessity for advaita. Some souls attain release soon and others take a longer time.

Realisation is not mere absence of misery. It has a positive aspect. That is the bliss we experience. All the values of empirical life are not cancelled and annihilated in Brahman-realisation. They are transcended and sublimated in it. other ex-

perience. Non-contradiction and coherence are the two tests by which we judge Reality. The two are the negative and the positive aspects of one and the same principle. It is self-manifest. DESCARTES was right in so far as he pointed out that thinking implies a thinker. Śāṅkara's description of the self is a step in advance of DESCARTES. DESCARTES identifies self with one aspect of experience, namely the experiencer; Śāṅkara identifies self with experience as a whole.

XII

The individual self obtains release sometimes even when he is embodied; then he is called a *jīvanmukta*. The physical body has no effect on the soul. The need for the *jīvanmukta* arises from the fact that we need reliable teachers who can preach advaita—experience from self-knowledge. Some are of opinion that the projective energy of nescience is separated from the obscuring energy in the *jīvanmukta*. Some others hold that *jīvanmukti* is a figurative mode of expression and it is not final release.

XIII

Besides the intellectual, there are other modes of realising Brahman. Truth which is Brahman is a perfect orb. We are bound to encompass it sooner or later. At best the intellectual methods might help us to reach Brahman sooner but it does not follow from this that the heart in devotion or the self dedicated to service is not also effective means of reaching Brahman. No spiritual pontiff can declare a monopoly of Brahman knowledge. The prescribed modes and paths are all right in their own place. They are good as guides and

we should not allow them to dominate us. It is intellectualism that has led us to speak in despairing terms about emotions. It is merely an ancient and an irrational prejudice against emotions and will that has relegated *bhakti* to a lower plane than *jñāna*. "The melting of the heart in love is not less noble than the expansion of it in wisdom, and the transcendence of the gulf between the agent and his action is not less noteworthy than the transcendence of that between the seer and the seen in knowledge." The man who trades in concepts is not intrinsically superior to him who trades in sounds and colours. The beatific vision may come through artistic as through intellectual channels and the truly moral man who has lost all thought of himself is not necessarily farther from realisation than the artist or philosopher. The significant contribution of post-Śaṅkara thinkers to advaita is the stress laid on "integral synthesis rather than an intellectual dominance".¹

The grand ideal of the advaita Philosophy is the supreme value of the real individual who is like the ideal artist and whose activities are creative. The pure advaitin is not tainted by the calculus of profit and loss. He has no purposive calculations or mechanical impulses for his acts. He needs no laws. He is a law unto himself. There is nothing outside him because he

¹ Realisation according to advaita is experience and not mediate knowledge. The *Nārāyaṇopaniṣad* says "asthi brahmeti cet parokṣa jñānameva tat; ahaṁ brahmāsmīti cet veda, sāksātkāra ucyate." . . . The term *Jñāna* does not merely comprise discursive reason S. Radhakrishnan explains it as follows. "It is not conceptual reasoning or metaphysical perspicacity, but is illumined Being, direct and immediate consciousness of reality." *Modern India and West* edited by O'MALLEY, pp. 340-341.

is the Supreme Spirit. When we are liberated from the narrow prejudices and cast-iron conventions we are able to realise more fully through music or poetry, through history or science, through beauty and pain that the really valuable thing in human life is the *ātman* and not such things as happen on the battle fields or in the clash of politics or in the regimented march of masses of men towards an externally imposed goal. It is this ideal of self-realisation that has chiefly attracted the Hindu mind. It is these men "that stamp infinity on thought and add to the invisible goodness of mankind". These men of Spirit penetrated by the sense of nothingness, desire to be reabsorbed in the universal whence they sprang, enduring mean-while with quiet contempt the fatuous energies of men who still think it is worth while to trade, to govern and build empires and to fight. It is of these men of spiritual realisation who are rapt in intimate union with Brahman the ocean of infinite bliss and knowledge—the Poet said, "their family is for ever sanctified, their mothers blessed and they are the salt of the earth."¹

¹ *Kulaṁ Pavitrāṁ, Jananī Kṛtārthā, vasundharā Puṇyavatī ca tena, apāra Saṁvit sukha sāgare līnaṁ pure brahmaṇi yasya cetah.*

CHAPTER IV

Advaita and the New Social Order

No doubt the philosophy of advaita and the view of life it inculcates had an attraction to the world of arcadian simplicity untouched by the transforming and revolutionary character of our machine age which has ushered in the Brave-New-World. Has advaita any message to our distracted passion-torn and war-shattered world, can advaita rival, supplement or correct the solutions set forth by the secular savants of humanity for the rescue of mankind from the present slough, can it give us material enough to build and rear up an enduring new social order, wherein men and women will be united in their loyalty to the supreme ideal of truth and in their resolution to put it in practice for the welfare of mankind?

We shall presently answer these questions in the affirmative. But, before doing so we shall have to examine and criticise the merits and demerits of the solutions attractively set forth by the secular savants of humanity as efficient foundations for the new world order.

(a) Taking the scientists of today first, they fall into three distinct groups in respect of their philosophical views. A certain section are in almost complete agreement with the philosophy of advaita. They assert that modern Physics and Mathematics lead to the acceptance of the spiritual nature of Reality, that science finds its sanctions in philosophy, that a new social order can be reared up only on the basis of sound religion. The chief representatives of this school are Eddington JEANS and EINSTEIN.

(b) Another group are out and out Materialists. They style themselves impenitent rationalists and profess complete loyalty to science. They rest content with tangible evidence and laboratory proof. They do not admit the reality of the hyper-physical and the super-sensuous. They declare that there is no point in life nor purpose at the heart of the universe. Life, they say, is bound to go the way of all other creatures. Mortality is the stamp that is deeply laid on everything in the world. They depict man as nothing more than a petty impotent and crawling creature on the planet. He is powerless against the forces of Nature though he can for a time circumvent them. They say that man's moral outlook is determined by the relative functioning of his glands. 'Man', they declare, 'is in the grip of fate and has to fight a hostile universe. There is no inherent purpose in the process of Reality.' They say that Religion is created to comfort man and make him keep on live. They exhort us to live as best as we can. They tell us there is no absolute truth and that values are relative; morality is conceived as the dictate of expediency. They ask us not to worry about the future. They say "let us learn to gather sloes in their season, to sheer sheep, and draw water from spring with grateful happiness, and no longer vex our souls with impossible longings."¹ They further say that man's freedom is just a myth, and that everything in the universe from "the movements of atoms to the events of History are governed by laws." The sceptics, the Agnostics and the Naturalists belong to this group. This outlook is set forth in elaborate academic technique in Mechanist Physics, Mechanist Biology, Behaviourism, Psychoanalysis and the Dialectical Materialism of MARX.

¹ POWYS, *Glory of life*.

(c) Scientific Humanists constitute the third group. Unlike the impenitent and dogmatic scientists they accept that science with its foot rule and the scale cannot know all that is in Reality. Certain entities called Values—Truth, Beauty, Goodness—cannot be quantitatively determined. Humanists admit the existence of Values and their significance to life. The supreme value for the humanists is the greatest happiness of the greatest number. To secure that he sets to reorder society by intelligently planning production and distribution of the goods of the earth. The reordering is necessary because of the possessive impulse in men. Some men get all the things of the world and leave nothing for others. Hence the phenomena of the Haves and Have-nots. If men are reasonable and positively scientific in their outlook, the humanist believes that they cease to be acquisitive. If once the possessive impulse is burnt up, it is easy for us to usher in the New Social Order.

(A) Communism is the chief variety of scientific Humanism. Its metaphysics and dialectics are of the materialist variety. The aim of the communist is to build a new social order where there would be model houses and higher wages. He, like the humanist, points out that our present society is largely based on the pernicious instinct of acquisitiveness. The few men at the top take such a large share of the goods of the world that a vast majority, that toil all day long get not even a meagre subsistence wage. It is this inequitable distribution of wealth that is responsible for the armies of the unemployed, for the presence of poverty amidst plenty, and for the rotting of wheat and the burning of coffee. Prof. R. H. TANNEY points out that the entire economy of the world is managed by the skill and the capital of fifty men. "If a Lord Milchet smiles there is sunshine and happiness

in ten thousand houses, if a Lord Morgons frowns two continents are plunged in gloom." It is this sorry state of affairs that has made the communist declare himself against the existing social order. He wants to bring out a new social order, which guarantees a minimum economic security to all.

The methods to be employed for bringing about such a social order, the communist says, are not persuasion and non-violence. The owners of Money Power will not part with their possessions in response to the appeal of sweet reasonableness. Hence, the need for an active violent revolution, to overthrow the men in possession of power. Violence, declared MARX, is the mid-wife of a new social order. It is the only means to liquidate all opposition. The communist is absolutely distrustful of religion and philosophy. MARX has a standing indictment against philosophers. "They interpret reality and do not change it". Further the communist believes that religion has helped the capitalists to grow stronger, because religion is a fine substitute for higher wages. Religion it is declared, "is the soul of the soulless conditions, the heart of the heartless world and the opium of the mind." The new social order of the communists is a paradise where everyone will have enough to eat and where hard heads will rest on soft pillows.

(B) There are a great many scientific humanists who are not communists. They all want the establishment of an egalitarian society. This they hope to achieve by peaceful settlements and not by violence. The Fabian socialists and Bertrand RUSSEL belong to this school. Through constitutional methods and regional arrangement they hope to usher in the New Social Order. The Federal Union Society in America and its exponent Clarence K. STREIT's *Well's Declaration of the Rights of Man* and

BRAILSFORD'S *Towards a New League*, are some of the prominent attempts in this direction. They look forward to the establishment of a world state. Some of them have drawn an elaborate constitution for the world state that has to emerge.

(C) Humanists (other than the communists and constitutionalists) exhort us to lead enlightened lives. They hold that the present world is intolerable and insensitive to values. They plead for the cultivation of careful tastes and a calculated indulgence of passions. "No God must be cheated and none overpaid." We are asked to escape to the world of art and poetry as a source of relief from the intense boredom of the sickly world. They declare 'what else can man do except escape from the dreadful world of 1943'. Escapism into literature, poetry and art are held as the ideal basis for a new social order.

The theistic religions of the world claim that adherence to each of them will bring about the New Social order. All the denominational religions are intolerant of each other, and claim exclusive possession of Truth and the means to attain it. Each variety of theism has its own prophets and revelation. Each of them holds that its religion is true and that of others is false. Hence the antagonism between religions, its crusades and programme of proselytism. The 'affirmative' theologies have allied themselves with the state for securing their adherents. These theologies in general declare that the entry into the kingdom of Heaven can only be secured by the grace of the Lord through the intermediary, namely the Prophet. Most of these religions hold that other religionists go to hell. They divide mankind into the elect and the condemned. Each religion has its own view of life and it expects totalitarian loyalty from its members. Human

conduct is regulated on the basis of a theory of reward and punishment. They paint heaven and hell in deep colours. The dogmatic theologians speak in terms of certainty about God and His dwelling place. Their God is a magnified human person with all the passions of a human being. "God is depicted as a father who has His favourite children to whom he communicates his mind. We have enough such religions" says SWIFT "to hate one other."

The political version of these dogmatic religions is the totalitarian state. The Fascists and Nazis have their supermen who promise their countrymen the establishment of the millennium. They take the place of the prophets and the saviours. They demand absolute and exclusive loyalty. They substitute for the kingdom of Heaven, the glory of an empire, the setting right of an injustice or the superiority of a race. The totalitarian cults are more fanatical than any religion. They have taken advantage of the undermining of men's faith due to the advance of scientific materialism and the corruption of the churches. They also have known that the human need to believe cannot be eradicated. 'If man cannot find a God in heaven, he must fall down before a God on earth. The God on earth turns out to be a HITLER or MUSSOLINI or STALIN. They tell us that the task of building up a new social order is too much for an ordinary man or woman.' We can build the New Social Order only by following the leadership of a Fuehrer or a Duce. The purpose of Humanity is the noble man or superman and others must yield to it. They alone can create and rear up a new social order.

Amidst this welter of secular solutions what chance has advaita? All the secular solutions share one defect

in common in that they have a partial and defective view of man. They believe that man is a body plus a mind. They do not take note of the existence of the spirit in man that makes his body and mind operate. The scientific materialist forgets that the very formulation in intellectual terms of his theory is due to the creative power of the spirit. Science suffers from some serious limitations and it is good that we avow it instead of recklessly repudiating it. The category of Mind, Purpose and Value are essentially qualitative elements. They do not submit themselves to the treatment of the measuring rod and the chemical balance. The discovery of most of the important scientific theories, on the very admission of the discoverers is due to a process that is unique and trans-intellectual. The scientific picture of the world leaves out a great deal. Reality in actual experience contains intuitions of spirit, value and mystical ecstasy. Science does not possess intellectual instruments with which to deal with these aspects of Reality. The impenitent scientists declare that there is no point in life or no purpose at the heart of the universe. This declaration arises as a result of the partial grasp of Reality. The scientist abstracts a simplified private universe possessing such qualities that are quantitatively determinable. Hence the incomplete picture.

Besides the inadequate conception of man they have as a result of it, a distorted view of the prime object of man's life. They are all agreed in asserting that men desire pleasure (their own most often) and of other people sometimes. Such an assertion is hardly fair to men and the broad testimony of history does not warrant it. The human being is essentially a creature, on the border land, he has animal appetites and spiritual yearn-

ings¹. It is partial and defective realism to consider man as essentially a mechanical product of several factors. The factors are enumerated sometimes in terms of natural laws after the manner of the impenitent scientist, and at other times in terms of sociological factors. The materialist interpretation of history, the central dogma of the communist, asserts that men are products of the environment. Morality of man is explained in terms of money power. The epithet 'dialectical' to the word 'materialism' does not in any way mitigate its allegiance to determinism.

To represent man as a product of forces is to deny him his autonomy and to ignore the imperishable spirit in him. It is too much to assert that man lives by bread alone. It is nothing short of a caricature to depict men as being determined by money power. "Xerxes had no lack of food or raiments or wives when he embarked upon the Athenian expedition. St. Francis and Ignatius Loyola had no need to found orders to escape from want".

Constitutional arrangements and large-scale social and economic reforms on psychological analysis prove to be failures unless the individuals are re-made. Large-scale social reforms do not abolish evil at its source; they deflect evil from one channel into another. If we are keen to establish ends, we must do something more positive than merely deflect evil. Evil must be suppressed in the individual's will. That is why it is necessary to re-make men. "Constitutions", as Plato observed, "are not born out of rocks but out of the dispositions of

¹ MONTAIGNE: We are I know not how, double in ourselves, so that what we believe we disbelieve, and cannot rid ourselves of what we condemn.

men." What we need is the exacting task of the re-making of man, and not exciting social experiments.

The humanists that take their refuge from the ills of life in the worlds of art and poetry can never find their rest. Man is a many-levelled being. The intellectual and the æsthetic in him are not the ultimate. Intellect is just like other physical sense organs and is bound by the law of decay. So it is the insufficiency of courage that makes us take to art and literature. In the words of a professor of literature, poetry and art only reveal the antinomies of emotion, while religion transcends them. Poetry conserves values as well as the apparent individualities, and religion surrenders them at the feet of God. Art, poetry and music reveal the rainbow colours of creation; Religion seeks the white radiance of eternity. As an English mystic poet put it, Poetry cannot save the soul but can make it worth saving. Poetry is the portal to religion.

The denominational religions can at best be used as a means or step to the spiritual religion of advaita. Sāṅkara admits that man is essentially a many-levelled being and the ultimate nature of man is existence, knowledge and bliss. On account of the presence and functioning of māyā man deludes himself into the belief that his interest is opposed to that of his neighbour. He believes that he is a body and mind, a separatist element in the world of claims and counter-claims. The separatist feeling must go before the idea of a common humanity is realised. This realisation is essentially a unique experience. It is the birth-right of every individual. The derelict and the sinner are not lost to the spirit. Advaita equates intolerance with irreligion. The spiritual experience as pure spirit is not something that is derived from an alien source. Spiritual realisation is not something

that is derivative. It is intrinsic. It is self-manifest and does not rest on the acceptance of any authority. The advaitin believes rightly that men who have this spiritual experience alone can have the necessary strength to create a new social order. It transforms the very dimensions of our life. It is this spiritual experience that enabled a Buddha, a Jesus and a Sankara to establish the kingdom of Heaven. Spiritual realisation is not a distant place of resort, but is the realisation of the imperishable in man. The kingdom of Heaven cometh not by observation, but is within us. That is why the gospel asks us to "seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all the other things will be added unto you." Without this realisation we can never have the necessary conviction and strength to work for humanity. This experience makes us feel the truth of the statement that 'there can be no happiness for any of us, until it is won for all'. The religion of advaita does not make us give up the religions in which we are born but asks us to vitalise the one in which we are. Advaita is not opposed to other religions but transcends them. It points out to men that the fate with which they are faced is not an external one, but is what is within them. It encourages men by assuring them that they are not unequipped for the battle of overcoming it. It is such a spiritual religion that can usher in the New Social Order. Dogmatic theologies of the West or East, and denominational religions do not cut much ice or satisfy the modern outlook. If we are to be saved from the chaos of despair, the semi-comforting creed of humanism, the escapism of art and literature, Advaita is the only sane religion left to us.

CHAPTER V

The Philosophy of Rāmānuja

The most important and representative school of theistic vedānta is the philosophy of viśiṣṭādvaita propounded by the Āḷvārs and elaborated and systematised by Rāmānuja. A number of god-intoxicated men who lived before Rāmānuja have recorded their experience of the fellowship with the Lord in their songs. The collection of these songs is just a little over four thousand. It goes under the name of Prabandha. The last thousand of the four thousand songs is held in great importance. It has been elaborately commented on by many. In Vaiṣṇava parlance it is called the *Bhagavad viṣayaṁ*. These Āḷvārs are drawn from various classes of men. Some of the prominent of them are Poyigai, Peyāḷvār, Tirumalasai, Nammāḷvār and Kulaśekhara. One of them is a woman named Aṇḍāl. She describes her divine marriage with the Lord in her songs. Seven of them were Brahmins and two were Śūdras and one of them belonged to the so-called low caste. They lived roughly between the seventh and the ninth centuries.

The Āḷvārs are poet-philosophers who sang their way to the Lord. They were inspired by their mystic experience to sing the glory of the Lord. To them God was not a theoretical abstraction, but a fact of experience. To them the reality of God was as much a fact as the green leaf is to the Botanist. They do not so much teach a doctrine as communicate an experience. The main theme of the songs is the glory and the greatness of the

Lord and His presence in all things. They hold with Wordsworth 'that every common bush is afire with god'. Salvation, the Ālvārs held, can only be attained by service to Humanity as an offering to the Lord and the consequent grace of the Lord.¹ A particular section holds the view that there is no need for any effort on the part of man to attain the Lord. The grace of the Lord is unconditional and all-comprehensive. Legend has that these Ālvārs are the incarnations of the ornaments of Lord Viṣṇu. One important section of Rāmānujites called *Tēṅgalais* place a great deal of reliance on the songs of the Ālvārs.

Rāmānuja like Śaṅkara has commented on the vedānta sūtras. His commentary goes by the name *Śrī Bhāṣya*. It has been commented on by Sudarśana Sūri in his book *Śrutaprakāśikā*. Rāmānuja commented on the *Gītā* and some select passages from the Upaniṣads. He freely handles in his writings the images and arguments of the Ālvārs who inspired him. The most prominent post-Rāmānuja thinker is Veṅkaṭa-nātha better known as Vedānta Deśika (circa 1350 A. D.) He was a many-sided scholar and the most eminent of the viśiṣṭādvaita dialecticians. Chief among his works are an incomplete gloss on *Śrī bhāṣya tattva-ṭikā* and the gloss on the *Gītā-bhāṣya* i. e., *Tātparya candrikā*. His vigorous attack on Advaita is set forth in his *Śata-dūṣaṇī*.

I

Like all the systems of Indian philosophy, Viśiṣṭādvaita also makes clear its epistemological presupposi-

¹ See Prahlāda's Prayer, "Na tvahaīm Kāmaya rājyaīm, na svargaīm nāpunarbhavaīm Kāmaya, dukhataptānāīm Prāṇināīm Ārtināśanaīm".

tions.¹ Knowledge for this school is a relation between the knower and the object known. The self as such does not directly come into contact with the object. An inseparable attribute called *dharmabhūta jñāna* starts from the soul, reaches the *manas* and then through the senses establishes contact with the objects and takes their form. Thus knowledge is produced. Knowledge always has a corresponding object. There is no objectless cognition. Further the cognition of an object without attributes is a fiction. No non-qualified object serves as the content of a cognition. They do not admit the bare cognition or the *nirvikalpaka* perception of the Nyāya school. The determinate (*savikalpaka*) perception according to Rāmānuja is the cognising of the new in the light of the old. It is not cognition of the attributes of the object, which have not been cognised in the first stage of the perception. Rāmānuja accepts three distinct *Pramāṇas* : perception, inference, and verbal testimony. All the other *pramāṇas*, analogy, (*upamāna*), presumption (*arthāpatti*), and subsumption (*sāmbhava*) are included under inference.²

The vedas are held to be *apauruṣeya* (not the result of human composition). The entire veda is purportful and there is no discontinuity between the *karma kāṇḍa* and the *jñāna kāṇḍa*. Rāmānuja treats the *pāñcarātra āgama* as an authoritative work. Rāmānuja's theory of truth and error is unique. On scriptural authority Rāmānuja admits that the constituent elements of every object is found in every other object.

1 For a running account of Śrī Rāmānuja's system see S. N. DAS GUPTA's *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III.

2 For a lucid account of Rāmānuja's Theory of Knowledge see Dr. K. C. VARADACHARI's book, *Rāmānuja's Theory of Knowledge*.

According to his view, all the objects of this visible world are compounds containing all the five elements in varying proportion. The realism of Rāmānuja's logic is thorough-going. "What exists alone can be cognised, and that knowledge in the absence of a real object corresponding to its content is inconceivable." Even for the content of a delusive cognition, there is the corresponding object in the external world. Without such an object cognition as such is impossible. From this it follows that there is no absolutely delusive cognition. By delusive cognition, Rāmānuja means that things are not cognised in their respective proportions. When the cognitions of mirage and shell-silver are declared to be false, what we have to understand by it is, not that the water and silver are not present there, but that they are not present in that proportion and quantity as can be put to practical use. Validity depends not only on correspondence but on its being adaptable to practical use in life (*vyavahārānugūṇatva*). This doctrine is called *satkhyāti*. Rāmānuja's theory of truth is in some respects akin to pragmatism.

II

The metaphysics of Rāmānuja is a bold attempt to reconcile the One with the Many. Śāṅkara stressed the reality of the *One* Brahman and explained the many as the illusory manifestations of the one, due to the functioning of *māyā*. The many are the superimpositions laid on Brahman by the nescience delimited soul on the analogy of the delusive perception of the snake in the rope. The many according to advaita are non-different from Brahman. Rāmānuja wanted to stress the reality of the many as well as the One. The one real Brahman contains the many real entities. The many are not the

illusory manifestations of the one but are in an inseparable relation of dependence, on the One. In the words of Max MULLER, Rāmānuja attempts to give the soul back to the vedāntins. The soul is lost in Brahman according to advaita. The reality of the many does not militate against the reality of the one. Rāmānuja's specific contribution to philosophy is the relation which he describes as existing between the One and the many.

The world of souls and matter are treated as attributes (*Viśeṣaṇas*) to Brahman. Brahman is not an attributeless homogeneous stuff of consciousness. He is a supra-personality (*puruṣottama*). He is endowed with an infinite number of auspicious attributes. He is all-pervading, all-powerful, all-knowing and all-merciful. His nature is fundamentally antagonistic to evil. His chief attributes are the world of souls (*cit*) and the world of matter (*acit*). He is the fundamental substance (*viśeṣya*) and *cit* and *acit* are his prime attributes (*viśeṣaṇas*). Viewed as a complex whole (*vaiśiṣṭya dr̥ṣṭyā*) the Brahman is one and without a second (*advitiya*). From this point of view, Rāmānuja's system is monistic. Viewed from the point of view of the attributes (*viśeṣaṇas*), they are different from Brahman but all the time dependent on and inseparable from Him. The separateness and plurality of the souls persist along with their dependence on God. Dependence on God does not go against their separateness. The *cit* and the *acit* are described as the body of the Lord. They are called the *prākāras* (outer courts). In the terse words of Prof. HIRIYANNA the Brahman of Rāmānuja "is an organic unity in which, as in all living organisms one element predominates over and controls the rest." The subordinate elements are termed *viśeṣaṇas* and the predo-

minent element *viśeṣya*. Because the *viśeṣaṇas* cannot by hypothesis exist by themselves separately, the complex whole (*viśiṣṭa*) in which they are included is described as a unity. Hence the name *Viśiṣṭādvaita*¹.

Reality according to Rāmānuja is not a bare identity, it is an identity-in-difference. But the difference is not unreal. The identity element holds the difference in check and makes for unity. The unity of Rāmānuja admits the co-ordination of identity and difference. The world of souls and matter are co-eternal with God, but not external to Him.²

According to Rāmānuja, the relation between these three entities Matter, souls and God is unique. The relation is called *aprthaksiddhi* relation. It is not to be confused with the Nyāya concept of a similar relation, *samavāya*. *Samavāya*, is an independent category. The *aprthaksiddhi* relation is an internal one. It maintains distinction between entities that are in intimate relation to each other.

The Brahman according to Rāmānuja is supra-personal entity and is the abode of auspicious attributes. He is the inner ruler immortal. The entire structure of *viśiṣṭādvaita* theism is built on the *antar-yāmin* concept (the indweller). The *Antaryāmi Brāhmaṇa* of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*³ Upaniṣad is the fundamental text for Rāmānuja. The concept that God is the indweller of all things on earth is well brought out. The scriptural texts that deny predicates to Brahman are interpreted by

¹ Prof. HIRIYANNA's *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 399.

² Prof. P. N. SRINIVASACHAR's *Rāmānuja's Idea of the Finite Self*, Chaps. II and III.

³ See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* III, VII, *Taittiriya āraṇyaka*, XI, 20, *Taittiriya*, Upaniṣad, II, 6, *Muṇḍaka*, II, 1, 4, and *Chāndogya* V, XVIII, 2.

Rāmānuja as denying finite and non-auspicious (heya) attributes. The despair expressed by some texts in respect of their capacity to comprehend Brahman does not mean that Brahman is unknowable. It means that so vast is the glory of Brahman, that it cannot be completely and adequately comprehended by scriptural statements.

Through the establishment of the organic relation between God on one side and Matter and soul on the other, Rāmānuja established the immanence of the Lord. In (the state of) *pralaya* (dissolution) the world of matter and souls remains in a subtle form in the Lord. This aspect of the Lord is called the *kāraṇāvasthā*, (casual state). In the *kāryāvasthā*, the effect stage, the world of souls gets attached to matter and is said to be born. From this it follows that the effect is not something which is entirely different from the cause. The cause itself gets transformed into the effect. This is called *pariṇāma-vāda*.

III

The moment that *pariṇāma* (change) is admitted, there is the doubt, as to whether God himself changes into the world of objects and souls. If he does change then, does that not affect His nature and taint him. Rāmānuja avoids these defects and still maintains the concept of change. This he does with the help of the category of the *dharmabhūta jñāna* (attributive knowledge). The souls as well as God do not change themselves. They are of the nature of the *jñāna* (knowledge) which is called the substantive *jñāna*. Besides this, the souls as well as the Lord have an attribute called *dharmabhūta jñāna* (attributive jñāna) which is a substance as well as an attribute. It is a substance in the sense that it undergoes change and produces effects of which it is the

material cause. It is not inert matter. It manifests all other objects, but it is incapable of manifesting its own self. What it manifests is never for itself but always for another. It is this *dharmabhūta jñāna* that operates through the help of the manas and gives us knowledge. It is not only knowledge that is regarded as a modification of *dharmabhūta jñāna* ; internal states like desire and aversion are also its transformations.¹ The Lord does not change, neither does the soul change. It is this attribute *jñāna* that changes. Hence there is no necessity for the *pariṇāma* of God. Here it is a little difficult to admit that God does not change, but this attribute changes. The change in the attribute is said not to taint the Lord, nor affect him in any way. Thus Rāmānuja steers clear of *pariṇāma*, and *vivartavāda*.

IV

The Lord is the supreme Reality and all other facts are dependent on him. Every word in the veda has for its plenary significance the Lord. It is only in a secondary sense, the words refer to the things of the world. This deeper significance of word is called *vedānta vyutpatti*. Besides the Lord, His wife Lakṣmī is held by the Teṅgalai sect to be as important as the Lord in respect of securing *mokṣa*. The Vaḍagalai sect puts Lakṣmī, on a subordinate plane and gives the Lord a greater importance than her. Lakṣmī represents the *grace* principle. She pleads for the extenuation of the rigour of the law of righteousness. If the souls of the world are to be judged by the strict standards of the Lord, there would not be the possibility of salvation for any. It is through the mediation of

¹ Prof. HIRIYANNA, *Outlines of Indian philosophy*, pp. 386-389.

Lakṣmī that the law of *karma* is a little softened and the *kṛpā* (compassion) element is introduced. The place of Lakṣmī in *viśiṣṭādvaita* is the same as the place of Jesus in the Christian theory of salvation.

The entire world of Reality according to Rāmānuja's scheme of categories can be divided into substances and attributes. They are called *dravyas* and *adravyas*. There are ten *adravyas* enumerated. They are the five qualities of the five elements (1) sound, (2) touch, (3) colour, (4) taste, (5) odour; the three *guṇas* *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. These go to constitute *prakṛti*. Potency and *saṃyoga* are also comprised under *adravyas*. Besides ten *adravyas* there are six *dravyas*. The six *dravyas* can be classified under two heads, the material and the non-material. Among the non-material entities are (1) *jīva* (2) God (3) *Nitya vibhūti* and (4) *Dharma-bhūta jñāna*. *Prakṛti* and Time constitute the material variety of the *dravyas*.

Prakṛti according to Rāmānuja is characterised by three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. They are inseparable from *prakṛti* but still they are distinct. It has a limited jurisdiction and stops with the border line of *nityavibhūti*, which is under the control of the Lord.

Time and space (*kāla* and *dik*) are treated differently. Time is real for Rāmānuja. It is not outside Brahman but it is within. It is also under the control of the Lord. Space is derived from *prakṛti* and *prakṛti* is prior to space.

Nitya vibhūti is super-*prakṛti* and it contains *sattva* element to the exclusion of all others. It is the matter with which the ideal world is constructed i. e. *Vaikuṇṭha*—the city of God.

V

Souls (*jīvas*) are of three types : those that are bound like us (*baddhas*), those that are liberated (*muktas*), and those that are eternally free (*nitya*). Tradition has it that over a hundred and three souls are eternally free. The Lord manifests himself for the good of his *bhaktas* (devotees) in five forms. The first form is called *para* i. e., the divine effulgent personality of Nārāyaṇa in *Vaikuṇṭha*. The *vyūha* form is the form of the Lord in the ocean of milk (Kṣīrasamudra). The *vibhava* form is the incarnation of the Lord as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa etc. The *antaryāmin* form is the indwelling form in the hearts of men. The last form is in the images (*arcāvatāra*) that are found in some sacred places such as Tirupati, Kāñcī, Śrīraṅgam. These idols are self-created and hence very sacred.

For the individual soul to attain *mukti* he must have devotion for the Lord. Devotion to the Lord is born from the performance of scripture-ordained duties. Hence the necessity for *karma*. Rāmānuja believes that the chapters dealing with *karma* are not opposed to *jñāna*. Karma is not only necessary in the preparatory stage, but also subsequently. But more than all these *bhakti* is held out as the true way to the Lord. The innumerable verses of the *Gītā* speak of the glory of *bhakti* and of the assurance the Lord gives His *bhaktas*. But the *bhakti* of Rāmānuja is not a very easy path. One has to cultivate an interest in things divine and an apathy for things not divine. The aspirant needs an elaborate preparation for *bhakti*¹. The preparation includes (1)

¹ Mahatma GANDHI's pet song gives in a nut-shell the attributes of an ideal *bhakta* of Viṣṇu. It is from the pen of the Gujarati poet Narasimha Mehta :

(contd. on next page)

discrimination of food (viveka), freedom from all else and longing for God (vimoka), continuous thinking of God (abhyāsa), doing good to others (kriyā) wishing well to all (kalyāṇa), truthfulness (satya), integrity of character (ārjava), compassion for others (dayā), non-violence (ahiṃsā), charity (dāna) and cheerfulness and hope (anavasāda).¹ Fortified with such ethical excellence, the soul should meditate on the Lord with the full knowledge of the relation that exists between the Lord and himself i. e. that the Lord is the ruler, controller and the sustainer of the soul.

VI

This grand ideal of *bhakti* is prescribed for the first three castes, and it is not without difficulties. This fact has been appreciated by Rāmānuja and so he propounds his famous doctrine of *prapatti*. This is a resolute act of surrender of our will to the Lord. This act of self-surrender should be done with the absolute faith that god will protect us. This is *śaraṇāgati*. Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā advocates this. He tells Arjuna 'surrender all duties and come unto me for shelter. Do not grieve,

"He is a true Vaiṣṇava who knows and feels another's woes as his own, Ever ready to serve, never boasts. He bows to everyone and despises no one, keeping his thought, word and deed pure. Blessed is the mother of such a one, he reveres every woman as his mother. He keeps a equal mind, and does not stain his lips with false-hood; nor does he touch another's wealth. No bonds of attachment can hold him, ever in tune with Rāmanāma his body possesses in itself all places of pilgrimage. Free from greed and deceit, passion and anger—this is the true Vaiṣṇava.

Āśramabhajanāvali p. 176.

1 S. RADHAKRISHNAN, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II. p. 704.

for I will release thee from all sins.¹ Vibhīṣaṇa's surrender to the Lord is a typical act of *prapatti*. This act has to be done with the help of a priest before the idol in a holy place. After this act which is within the reach of one and all, the individual need hardly bother himself about his future.² So great has to be the faith in this that the *teṅgalai* school holds the view that the act of *prapatti* should not be repeated at all. Further, the Lord is held by the *teṅgalai* section to be all-loving and that his grace is secured to the individual without any attempt on the part of the aspirant (*nirhetuka kaṭākṣa*): this view is called the *Mārjārakiśoranyāya*. The *Vaḍagalai* section holds the view that the aspirant must make himself a fit receptacle for the grace of the Lord. They hold that the grace of the Lord is not so unconditional; this view is called the *Marakatakiśoranyāya*. It is not given to all and sundry. But this does not mean that *mokṣa* is secured by mere individual effort.

The immanence of the Lord does not militate against the necessity for the law of *karma*. Karma does not go against the omnipotence of the Lord. 'If the law of *karma* is independent of God then God's absoluteness is compromised. The critic who declares that there is no room for an independent God as well as for the law of the *karma* does not understand the Hindu idea of God. The law of *karma* expresses the will of God. The order of *karma* is set up by God, who is the director of *karma*. Since the law is dependent on God's nature, God himself

¹ *Gītā* XVIII, 16.

² See *Rāmāyaṇa* VI, 18, 33 and 34, where Rāma proclaims: *Sakṛdeva prapannāya tavāsmīti ca yācate abhayaṁ sarvabhūtebhyo dadāmyetaḍ vrataṁ mama*.

may be regarded as rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked.¹ The same idea is expressed in a different manner when we say that God does not suspend the law of *karma*.

The soul that desires to surrender himself to God has to make a resolve to follow the will of God, not to cross His purpose, to believe that He will save, to seek help from Him and Him alone, and to yield up one's spirit to Him in all meekness. The secret of *Prapatti* is the complete crucifixion of the ego at the feet of the Lord. It is this complete act of self-surrender that results in the remaking of man².

Among the released souls some desire to stay perpetually in the presence of the Lord, and others with a view to save society, come down to the earth to preach the love of the Lord and wean men from their wicked ways.

Śrī Rāmānuja's philosophy appeals to the mass of men and fills the heart of men with hope and gives the aspirant the solace and the grace of a personal God.

¹ Prof. S. RADHAKRISHNAN, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 694.

² St. Paul in his *Epistle to the Corinthians* says, "Thou fool that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die".

Christ said "you must be reborn again".

CHAPTER VI

The Philosophy of Madhva

The most powerful philosophic attack on the monism of Śrī Saṅkara is from Śrī Madhva. Madhva's Dvaita Vedānta is a pluralistic, theistic and realistic system. He derives most of his philosophical doctrines from the triple texts, (the Gītā, Vedānta Sūtras and the Upaniṣads). He openly declares in many of his works that he is the chosen prophet of Lord Viṣṇu commissioned to interpret correctly the sacred texts and refute the mis-interpretations foisted thereon by other commentators. Tradition holds the view that Madhva is the third incarnation of Vāyu, and that Vāyu appeared as Hanūmān and Bhīma in his two incarnations. Throughout his works Madhva speaks after the manner of a Messiah with a mission.

Like all the other traditional *ācāryas* Madhva has commented on the triple texts. He wrote two commentaries on the Vedānta sūtras as well as the Gītā. One of the commentaries on the Vedānta sūtras is in verse—the Anuvyākhyāna. Besides the commentaries on the triple texts, he has ten small independent tracts (*prakaraṇas*) explaining the different tenets of his system.¹ He has written a great deal besides these works. He has on the whole thirty-seven works to his credit, some of them being devotional hymns. The works include a

¹ Dr. R. Nagaraja SARMA's Book '*Reign of Realism*' is an exposition of the ten *prakaraṇas* of Madhva.

summary account of the Mahābhārata and a commentary on the Bhāgavata. It is claimed that he wrote his *Bhāṣya* after an interview and at the command of Bādarāyaṇa. Hence it is asserted to be authoritative.

The most prominent post-Madhva thinkers are Jayatīrtha, Vyāsarāja and Rāghavendra. Jayatīrtha's contribution to Dvaita is unique. He has commented on all the works of Madhva excepting a few easy works. He is called the Tīkācārya (the commentator) of Dvaita vedānta. His masterpiece is his Nyāyasudhā, a detailed running commentary on Madhva's Anuvyākhyāna. It is over six hundred pages in length. It is a mistake to call it a commentary. It is the best work on Madhva's philosophy. There is no aspect of Madhva's doctrine that this classic does not discuss. He renounced the world at a very young age and within a period of thirty years raised Dvaita vedānta to a level of śāstraic equality with Advaita. As a dialectician, his powers are most astounding; "for beauty of language, brilliance of style, keenness of argument, fairness in reasoning, for refreshing boldness, originality of treatment and fineness of critical acumen, he has few equals". He belongs to the group of great philosophical prose-writers which includes Śaṅkara, Śabara and Vācaspati.

Vyāsarāja was the great logician of Dvaita vedānta. He fought the scholastic battle with the Advaitin with great vigour. In his famous Nyāyāmṛta he has examined all the possible arguments put forward in favour of advaita by post-Śaṅkara thinkers, and has refuted them in detail. The whole work teems with logical skill. Besides this he has to his credit the polemical treatise on the dialectic of difference entitled *Bhedojjīvana*. Though he used logic as an instrument to demolish

rival systems, he did not spare the Nyāya school. In his Tarkatāṇḍava he has refuted in detail many a doctrine of the Nyāya system. Lastly, he wrote a brilliant commentary on Madhva's *Sūtra bhāṣya* called *Tātparyacandrikā*. This commentary covers the first two chapters of the vedānta sūtras.

II

Like all other systems Dvaita vedānta also has certain epistemological pre-suppositions. Knowledge for Madhva is a relation between a knower and an object. There is no cognition of a non-existent thing. His theory of truth is akin to the correspondence theory of the Nyāya school. That *jñāna*, which cognises the attributes of an object as it is, is truth. That cognition, which cognises the object other than as it is, is error. Even in error there is a presentative counter-part to it in the external world. The deluded individual mistakes one thing for another. In twilight the shell is mistaken for silver. What is shell is taken as silver. This doctrine of error is called *abhinava anyathā khyāti* (taking one thing as another). The absolutely non-existent silver is said to be cognised by the deluded individual. The radical realism of Madhva goes to the extent of admitting the existence of the cognition of absolute non-existence (*atyantāsat pratīti*).¹ The Nyāya school held the view that the silver cognised in the shell was present in the shop and was indirectly cognised by the perceiver. But Madhva goes a step further and holds

¹ See author's article on "Error, doubt, and dream" *Journal of Oriental Research*, Vol. XI, parts 3 and 4.

that the absolute-non-existence of silver itself is cognised in the shell. It is the rigour of his realism that is responsible for his theory of error. For Madhva the test of truth is the cognition of a thing as it is (*yathārtham pramāṇam*)¹. He admits three *pramāṇas*, perception, inference and verbal knowledge and subsumes the rest under the three *pramāṇas*. Perception is held in great regard. It is held to be *anupajīvyā pramāṇa* i. e., the support of other *pramāṇas*. Perception is a primary means of knowledge and inference and verbal testimony are based on this. Inference involves the knowledge of *vyāpti* and *vyāpti* being a relation between two invariable things has to be cognised². The relation between word and its sense can only be known after cognising the word. Hence perception is held to be a very important *pramāṇa* in Dvaita Vedānta.

As for verbal testimony the *vedas* (*śruti*) are held to be impersonal and eternal. Madhva's belief in *vedas* is so great that he denies validity even to the Lord's words if and when it contradicts the spirit of the *Vedas*. That is why Madhva rejects the *Nyāya* argument that the *vedas* are written by God. Revelation is the ultimate source of divine knowledge. Besides the four *Vedas*, Madhva accepts the authority of some *purāṇas*, *pāñcarātra āgamas*, *Mūla Rāmāyaṇa* and the epic *Mahābhārata*. Madhva says that as a rule those texts that are in accord with the prime purport of the *vedas* are valid and those that are opposed to it are invalid.

¹ See author's article on '*Pramāṇa in Madhva's epistemology*', *Indian Culture*, Jan. 1937.

² See author's article on '*Inference in Dvaita Vedānta*', *New Indian Antiquary*, Vol. I, No. 8.

He adopts the six strict canons of interpretation and derives the doctrines of his system from the Vedas. He leaves out no portion of the veda as non-authoritative. He takes the entire veda as implying a single system of thought. The central purport of the scripture is that Viṣṇu, i.e., Nārāyaṇa is the supreme Lord of the Universe. He is not an attributeless and homogeneous stuff of consciousness. He is the abode of infinite auspicious attributes. He is a *divya maṅgaḷavighraha* (the most auspicious form). He is the supreme entity and has none above him. He is the sustainer, destroyer, and creator of the universe. There is nothing beyond this *Saguṇa Brahman*. The *Nirguṇa Brahman* of advaita is nothing more than the void. Those scriptural texts that speak of the Brahman as incomprehensible, are to be understood to mean as referring to the inexhaustible glory of the Lord, and not his unknowability. When the Lord is referred to as being devoid of attributes, it means that he is devoid of inauspicious or (prākṛta guṇas). He is the very embodiment of bliss and jñāna.

Next to him in rank is Lakṣmī. She is also classified under the head of the dependants ; but she has no taint and no birth like other souls. She also is all-pervasive as the Lord. Next to her in rank is Vāyu whose third incarnation is Madhva. Vāyu is the mediator between the Lord and other souls. All the souls are to reach the Lord only through the worship and mediation of Vāyu. The Lord says "I take nothing that is not offered through Vāyu." After Vāyu the rest of the gods and their wives are arranged in an hierarchy. This is technically called the *tāra-tamyakrama*. We are exhorted to worship the Lord not merely as a superior to us, but

as the ruler of all the gods. The other gods are to be worshipped according to their ranks as the retinue of the Lord.

The existence of the Lord is established through the help of the authority of the scriptures. The scriptures refer to Him as the creator, sustainer etc., of the Universe. Hence the Universe is held to be real. The Universe of souls and matter (*jaḍa jīva prapañca*) is as real as Brahman. If it is contended that the whole universe is unreal, the creator of such an universe would be no master-mind, but would be a mere juggler. The unreality of the Universe militates against the omnipotence of the Lord. So Madhva is keen on establishing the Reality of the Universe. It is his infinite faith in an all-powerful Lord that makes him undertake the dialectical warfare against the Advaitin's doctrine of *māyā*.

He examines in great detail the position of *advaita* and points out that doctrine of *adhyāsa* (super-imposition) is not demonstrable in terms of any *pramāṇa*. Madhva holds that there is no authority whatsoever for the establishment of the doctrine of the illusoriness of the Universe. He holds that what the *pramāṇas* cannot guarantee is not true.

As against the contention that *advaita* ascribes a relative type of reality to the universe, Madhva argues that such an ascription assumes what has yet not been proved. The argument would hold water, after the Advaitin's establishment of the two degrees of Reality and not prior to it. So, Madhva holds that the universe of souls and matter are real.

III

From this we are led to the famous doctrine of ' difference ' of *Dvaita vedānta*. The things of

the world are held to be entirely different from one another, not only are the things of the world different but their attributes too. Difference is foundational to reality. If the ultimate reality of the category of difference is proved, the pluralistic realism of Madhva is automatically established. A scheme of *five-fold difference* is set forth by Madhva. They are : (1) The difference between Jiva and Īśvara, (2) between jīva and jīva, (3) jaḍa (matter) and jaḍa, (4) jaḍa and jīva and (5) Īśvara and jaḍa. Most post-Madhva philosophers have attempted to prove the ultimate reality of the category of difference through the dialectic method with the help of inferences. According to Madhva difference is of the very nature of the thing (*svarūpa*).¹

The individual souls are held as being eternally different and dependant on the Lord. Identity of the individual soul with Brahman is not the purport of the vedas as Advaita holds. The souls are all dependant on the Lord for their salvation. Salvation or *mukti* means the removal from the soul of the sheath of ignorance that covers it. Besides this cover, there is another cover, which hides the soul from the perception of the Lord. The grace of the Lord dawns on the spiritual aspirant and at the moment the two covers are removed and the soul comes to have a perception of its real *svarūpa*. The realisation of one's own *svarūpa* is called liberation (*mokṣa*).¹

Salvation or *mokṣa* is not for one and all. Madhva does not believe in the Advaita doctrine of *sarvamukti* (universal salvation). Many are called, but few are

¹ See author's article on "*The Category of Difference in Vedānta*" *The Philosophical Quarterly*, July 1941.

chosen. Those whom it pleases the Lord to save are saved. We are not saved because we have merits. Salvation involves two factors, the grace of the Lord and the merit of the soul. On the part of the soul he has to strive hard and achieve the *jñāna*, that Lord Viṣṇu is the supreme God and that salvation lies through the path Madhva has indicated. Performance of scripture ordained duties and intense devotion to the Lord are prescribed. But this devotion is not mainly emotional. It is the result of detachment to the things of the world and attachment to God. *Bhakti* is defined as that kind of attachment to the Lord based on a complete understanding of the supremacy of the Lord, which transcends the love of one's own self and possessions and which remains unshaken in death and in difficulty.¹

Such a devotion is not born out of ignorance. It is born through detachment and *jñāna*.

The practice of *bhakti* saves only a few select individuals. All the human souls of the world are broadly divided under three heads: (a) *Mukti yogya* (b) *nityasamsārins* and (c) *tamoyogyas*. The classification of the souls is based on the intrinsic nature of the souls. The *sāttvika* souls are of good nature and they are destined to attain *mokṣa* i. e., the feet of the Lord. They have true knowledge of the nature of the Lord and reach Him through their *bhakti*. The *nityasamsārins* are of mixed nature, and they dangle between heaven and earth. To them there is no permanent place of stay. According to one section of the followers of Madhva there is a place reserved for the *nityasamsārins*, where they have a sort

¹ See Jayatīrtha's *Nyāya Sudhā*, p. 18.

of experience which is a mixture of pain and pleasure. Others hold that there is no such place. The *tamoyogyas* are destined to eternal damnation. Their future is in a hell called *Andhatamas*, from which there is no return for them.

Madhva holds the dogmatic view that the *tamoyogyas* souls are never saved at all. The intrinsic nature of souls is unalterable. Moral effort and education can never alter the *svarūpa* of the soul. The *tamoyogyas* can never be changed into a *sattva jīva*. This doctrine is not calculated to egg on individuals to moral enterprise. Madhva sets a limit to the abilities of the soul. But it must be borne in mind that the *svarūpa* of the soul is not known till the time of release. It is in order to make each soul perceive its nature that the Lord is said to bring the souls into life. God helps each soul to work according to its *svarūpa*.

Even in *mokṣa* the individual souls are not all identical in respect of the enjoyment of their bliss. They are all free from sorrow and from births. There is gradation in the enjoyment of their bliss.

The contention of the Dvaitin against the Advaitin can be set forth thus: That the Advaitin's Brahman is non-different from the *śūnya* of the Buddhist, (b) that the world of matter and souls is ultimately real, (c) that the individual souls are absolutely and eternally different from and dependant on Brahman, (d) that the Brahman of the *śrutis* is not the attributeless (nirguṇa) but is the abode of the auspicious attributes, and (e) that the import of *śruti* is not in tune with Advaita.

CHAPTER VII

The Upaniṣads

The Upaniṣads have been called the 'Himalayan peaks of the Hindu religion'. Just as that great mountain range determines the climate, the rainfall and the physical features of this peninsula, so do these heights of wisdom determine the scope and the quality of the spiritual life of the races that inhabit it. In point of popularity however, the Upaniṣads come far behind the Gītā among the Hindu scriptures. While the merit of the Upaniṣads has been acknowledged by our traditional commentators and by the best minds of modern Europe, it is a pity that these great 'Himalayas of Hindu Poetry' have not yet found their due place in modern Indian Education.

The Upaniṣads are the concluding portions of the vedas. Hence they are called vedānta. They are the foundations of all the systems of Indian Philosophy. 'There is no important form of Hindu thought, heterodox Buddhism included, which is not rooted in the Upaniṣads.' All the schools of vedānta regard the Upaniṣads as one of their triple scriptural authorities. All the ācāryas have commented on the ten of the important Upaniṣads.¹

European scholars have not failed to perceive the great message of the Upaniṣads.² SCHOPENHAUER, the

¹ Rāmānuja has not commented on all the ten Upaniṣads as Śaṅkara and Madhva have done. In his *vedārtha Saṅgraha* he has commented on select and controversial passages.

² Thoreau exhorts men :— "Do not read the *Times*, read the eternities"

pessimist philosopher held the view that from every sentence of the Upaniṣad, deep, original and sublime thoughts arise and that they are pervaded by a high and holy spirit of earnestness. He concludes that in the whole world of thought there is no study so beneficial and elevating as that of the Upaniṣads and that it is destined sooner or later to become the faith of the whole world. Max MULLER observes that the Upaniṣads are like the light of the morning, like the pure air of the mountains, so simple and so true if once understood. The message of the Upaniṣads is not without its lesson to the modern world largely governed by the lust for dominions and led by brute force. The sages of the Upaniṣads have proclaimed for all times that he who sees variety and not unity wanders on from death to death.¹

The term Upaniṣad has been interpreted in a number of ways. It means according to Śaṅkara 'that which destroys ignorance and leads to Brahman. Others have interpreted the term to mean secret doctrine (rahasya). Yet others have rendered the term as 'sitting near the preceptor to receive spiritual instruction'. The seers of the Upaniṣad after experiencing spiritual truth, imparted it to their disciples making sure of the eligibility and the earnestness of the aspirant. The method adopted by the Upaniṣadic seers to impart the knowledge of the spirit is not a barren dialectic method. With the help of powerful images and through the technique of informal dialogues they conveyed the truths felt on their pulse to their disciples. The Upaniṣads in fact are a collection of parables and dialogues. Their poetic value

¹ Kāṭha Upaniṣad, IV, 11.

consists in the richness and the clarity of their suggestions. The upaniṣadic ṛsis were half-poetical and half-philosophical in their approach to reality. The vedic vision of the seers is the 'poetic testament of a people's reaction to the wonder and awe of existence. The wonder and the poetry of the vedic hymn is deepened and widened by the meditation in the Upaniṣad'.¹

II

The Upaniṣads are interpreted from two points of view, theistic and the absolutistic. Both the view-points accept the Upaniṣadic concept of man which is entirely different from the Biologist's analysis of man. Man is not a mere physical organism. The Upaniṣads warn us not to identify the body (deha) with the soul (ātman). The Greek view that man is a compound of a body plus an intellect is also criticised. The intellect according to the Upaniṣads is neither more nor less than a sense organ (indriya). Just like other sense organs it too is a compound of the five elements, with the one difference that it is internal. It decays with the body. So it is wrong to identify the essential and the abiding in man with either the body or the intellect. Man is essentially the imperishable soul, which has neither birth nor death. The intrinsic form (svarūpa) of the soul is *jñāna*.

So far the theists and the absolutists are agreed. The theists hold the view that the souls are many and that there is a super-soul whose grace is essential for the salvation of the individual soul. The individual souls find that all the pleasures of the

¹ Rabindranath TAGORE's *Introduction to the Hindu scriptures* E. M. L. Series.

world are short-lived and do not yield abiding happiness. The vedic hymns and sacrifices speak the language of utilitarianism. It is governed by the law of rewards and punishments. The pleasures of heaven and even of its rulership belong to the perishable world. There is return from these pleasures as soon as the merit (*punya*) acquired by the individual is exhausted. The stamp of mortality is deeply set on them. Hence the Upaniṣads exhort us to attain that state from which there is no diminishing of the bliss (*ānanda*). This in technical parlance is called *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* is distinguished from *abhyudaya* (welfare). "The good is one thing, the pleasant is another, and he that wishes to live the life of the spirit must leave the sensual life far behind."¹ The spiritual aspirant must seek the good (*śreyas*) and not the pleasant (*preyas*).

Mokṣa is the soul's realisation of its intrinsic nature through devotion to the Lord. The true nature of the soul is lost sight of by individuals on account of the veil of *Samsāra*. So they revel in the perishable pleasures of life. This veil can be rent apart only by the infinite grace of the Lord (*Bhagavat prasāda*). The Lord is the supreme *puruṣa*. Superior to the *puruṣa* there is nothing. That is the goal and the supreme destination.²

This supra-personal god (*puruṣottama*) is Brahman. He is the abode of an infinite number of auspicious attributes. The Upaniṣads speak of him in some places as 'Truth, Knowledge and Infinitude',³ and in other places as 'Truth, Knowledge and Bliss'.⁴ There is a famous passage attributing creation to Him 'that verily from which

¹ Kaṭha Upaniṣad ii, 1.

² Ibid iii, 10 & 11.

³ Taitt. Upaniṣad 2. 1. 1.

⁴ Ibid. 2.

these beings are born, that by which the beings live, that into which when departing they enter, seek to know that, i. e., Brahman.¹ He is referred to as the 'omniscient' and the 'all-knower'.² He is the efficient cause of the world and not its material cause. He never becomes the world of objects and undergoes change. God is immanent as well as transcendent. He is the inner-ruler (antaryāmin) of all the souls and the things of the world. The all pervading nature of the Lord is described as follows: 'by the Lord is encompassed all that there is in this world'.³ His immanence is the theme of a number of passages 'that which is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech indeed of the speech, the breath of the breath and the eye of the eye'.⁴ 'Subtler than the subtle, grosser than the gross, the Lord is conceived in the cave of the heart'.⁵ The Upaniṣads speak of Him as the chief reality 'the eternal among the eternal, the intelligent among the intelligent beings, the one among the many, he who grants desires'.⁶ The Upaniṣads conclude 'the word which all the vedas declare, that which all the penances proclaim, and desiring which people lead an austere life, that word I tell thee in brief; it is the Lord'.⁷

The performance of scripture-ordained duties and uninterrupted devotion to the Lord are the means to salvation according to theists. Bhakti i. e. devotion to the Lord is the boat with which *samsāra* has to be crossed. An intense realisation of our creatureliness is necessary

¹ Taitt. Upaniṣad 3. 1.

³ Īśa. „ 1.

⁵ *Ibid* II. 20.

⁷ *Ibid* II. 15.

² Muṇḍ. Upaniṣad I. 9.

⁴ Kena. „ I 2.

⁶ Kaṭha. „ V. 13.

to *mokṣa*. An unremitting moral life, without the desire for the fruits of the activity, free from the sense of egoity and agency in actions, are characteristics of a *bhakta*. Every activity and the fruits of it must be surrendered to the Lord. Self-surrender without any reservation is the *sine qui non* of a *Bhakta*. This by itself does not entitle one to *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* is not the keeping up of a contract. It is a gift, a product. With all the moral activity and sense of surrender on the part of the devotee, it is open to the Lord to deny *mokṣa*. It is His gift. The prime cause of *mokṣa* is Īśvara's grace. His grace is the source of the gift. The Upaniṣad states 'not through much learning is ātman reached, not through the intellect, or the sacred teaching. It is reached by the chosen of Him. To his chosen the ātman reveals His glory'.¹ It is a case where many are called but few are chosen.

The moment the spiritual aspirant has the immediate vision of the Lord the scales fall from his eyes and he realises the real nature of the soul. With the vision of the Lord 'the fetters of the heart are broken, and all doubts are dissolved'.² We should not lose sight of the fact, that though the soul in its released state is not subject to suffering and sorrow it is still in no sense the equal of the Lord. Creatureliness differentiates the soul from the Lord.

To the theistic interpreters of the Upaniṣads the world of plurality is as real as Brahman. It is the manifestation of the power of the Lord. It is his creative energy (*līlā*). The problem of the evil does not deeply

¹ Kaṭh. Upaniṣad II, 23.

² Muṇḍ. Upaniṣad II, 8.

disturb the theists. Things look evil because, we view them *sub specia temporis*. The acceptance of the existence of evil does not militate against the omnipotence and goodness of the Lord. "This is the best of all possible worlds" because God created it.¹

III

Side by side with the theistic interpretation of the Upaniṣads, we have the mighty tradition of the absolutist interpretation of Śaṅkara. Several passages in the Upaniṣads lend themselves to this view. There are a number of aphoristic statements which according to Śaṅkara bring out the true import of the scripture. Scriptural statements that speak of a plurality of souls, the reality of this universe, and the inalienable difference between the souls and Brahman, are treated as the statement or the amplification of the case to be refuted by the monistic arguments. The terse statements that identify the supreme reality with the individual self are said to be the true conclusion of the Upaniṣads. They are 'I am Brahman',² 'That thou art',³ 'this soul is Brahman',⁴ 'All this is Brahman',⁵ 'consciousness is Brahman'.

¹ See Tagore's *Sādhana*, Chap. III. *Problem of Evil*. He holds that it does credit to God to have created men with Free will and Evil, than to have manufactured perfected robots. Evil helps to school the soul into perfection. Keats describes life 'as a vale of tears' in which we must learn the 'art of soul-making'; Mahatma GANDHI'S answer is typical of the theists. He said "I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method, to want to do so is to be co-equal with God."

² Br. Upaniṣad I, 4, 10.

³ Ch. Upaniṣad VI, VIII, 7.

⁴ Br. Upaniṣad II, 5, 9.

⁵ Muṇḍ. Upaniṣad II, II, 11.

These short statements have no padding, no gagging, cliché, but they are the report of the experience of the seers. They are like tense and brief messages sent from sinking ships or isolated forces.

Reality according to the Absolutist view is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. There is nothing besides this central Reality, and from this hypothesis it follows that Brahman cannot be characterised in terms of anything other than itself. Hence it is declared to be self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*). 'Nor does the sun shine there, nor the moon and the stars, nor do these lightnings shine; whence then this light? Him alone, as he shines, does everything else shine after. By His lustre does all this shine distinctly'.¹ Any description of Brahman, in terms other than itself, is logically unintelligible. Passages that describe Brahman as knowledge, Truth and Bliss are interpreted by Śaṅkara in the light of an appositional construction. The statements do not mean Brahman has knowledge, bliss etc. It means Brahman is knowledge, Brahman is bliss etc. The import of the predicate is the establishment of the identity with the subject. The Upaniṣadic passages describe Brahman in negative terms *neti neti* (not this, not that). He is said to be described without words (*avacanena*, *provāca*). The logic behind this type of description is as follows. All our human knowledge expresses itself in terms of a relation that exists between the knower and a known object. Brahman can never become an object of knowledge, as it is *impartite* and there is nothing besides it. Mediated knowledge of it is necessarily incomplete knowledge. Hence Upaniṣads express their inability to describe

¹ Kāṭha Upaniṣad V, 15.

Brahman: 'Words and mind go to Him not, and return. But he who knows the joy of Brahman fears no more'.¹

The inability to describe Brahman has lead the Upaniṣads to refer to Him in paradoxical terms. 'It moves, it moves not, it is far and near, it is inside all this; and it is outside of all this'. Another Upaniṣad describes it as 'other than the known, verily it is and also above the unknown; thus we have from the ancients, who have discriminated it for us. What cannot be expressed through speech and whereby speech is expressed, that alone know ye as Brahman, not this which people worship'.¹

The negative description of Brahman does not imply its non-existence. A host of critics have charged Śaṅkara's interpretation as leading to nihilism (a variety of Buddhism). Such charge is hardly fair to Śaṅkara. In the words of RADHAKRISHNAN, the negative definitions of Brahman refer to the distance between time and eternity, Appearance and Reality. Though the nature of the supreme is unknowable in terms of intellectual categories, yet it can be realised by spiritual effort and discipline.

The absolutists hold the view that the world of plurality which we cognise together with the empirical selves is an illusory manifestation of Brahman. This is due to the functioning of a fundamental, beginningless and positive nescience (māyā). Māyā suppresses the real i. e., Brahman and shows up in its place the many. All of us are Brahman, but on account of the functioning of nescience we identify ourselves with so many limitations. As long as limitation persists we will have the cognition

¹ Taitt. Upaniṣad II, 9. ² Kena Upaniṣad I, 4, 5 & 6.

of the many. It is this limitation that is responsible for our sorrows. This illusory manifestation of the one as the many is explained in *vedānta* on the analogy of the delusive cognition of a rope as a snake in twilight.

In the famous sixth chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad the seer Uddālaka gives instruction to his son Śvetaketu 'my dear son, as by one clod of clay, all that is made of clay is known, the difference being only in name, arising from speech, but the truth being all is clay. By one nugget of gold all that is made of gold is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being all that is is gold'. After this the venerable father with nine apt examples illustrates the fundamental truth that the individual soul essentially is non-different from Brahman. The separatist feeling is due to delusion, which gives rise to the knowledge of difference.

The absolutist explains the human affections that bind men and women to their kith and kin as essentially due to the love of the *ātman* in them. In the famous dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī this is brought out clearly. Yājñavalkya says to his wife 'verily my dear, it is not for the love of the husband, that the husband is dear; but it is for the love of the *ātman* that he is dear. It is not for the love of the wife, that the wife is dear, but it is for the love of the *ātman* that she is dear, it is not for the love of the son, that the son is dear, but for the love of the *ātman* he is dear. Verily my dear, all things are dear to us, not as in themselves they are, but it is for the love of the *ātman* that they are dear'.¹

Dr. DEUSSEN, the celebrated German Vedānta scholar, said to a gathering at Bombay 'the gospels quite correctly

¹ Br. Upaniṣad IV, 5.

establish as the highest law of morality, the dictum "love your neighbour as yourself". But why do I do so? Because by order of nature I feel pain and pleasure only in myself, not in my neighbour. The answer for it, DEUSSEN held, is given by the Upaniṣads. The neighbour is no other than my own self. All are one and the same *ātman*. The upaniṣads derive the doctrine of the fellowship of men from the central truth namely, the fundamental oneness of all.

What should the individual enveloped in delusion do in order to shake off this delusion and realise Brahman? Brahman realisation is not an external act. It is not something like the theist's mokṣa derived from the grace of a Lord. It is like coming into one's own self. In the words of the learned Advaitin, Vidyāranya, it is like the finding of a forgotten gold chain which is all the time round one's neck. The empirical *jīvas* are not the *ātman*. When the nescience ceases to function there is Brahman-realisation. Knowledge i. e., *jñāna* is the means to it. The Upaniṣadic prayer is 'from Delusion, Darkness, and Death lead me to Truth, Light and Eternal life'. To begin with, on the intellectual side the aspirant is required to study the sacred scriptures under a guru (preceptor). 'He that has a teacher knows', says the Upaniṣad. Mere hearing (*śravaṇa*) from the preceptor is not enough. It must be supplemented by continued reflection (*manana*). Then there is the meditation stage which results in realisation (*nididhyāsana*). Prior to the study the individual is asked to cultivate the cardinal virtues that are essential for a moral life. The performance of scripture-ordained duties, without violating the spirit of the scripture is also enjoined on the aspirant.

These activities, Śaṅkara holds, purify the hearts of men (*sattva śuddhi*). Intense moral life is indirectly helpful in creating the necessary frame of mind for metaphysical enquiry. With such equipment man gets at the inward vision. This inward vision results through *vairāgya* (detachment). The term 'detachment' must be understood in its true spirit and not in its formal sense. It is only negative in name. It entails the practice of all the virtues. It is not the giving up of all social duties. It preaches an ethics of *self-renunciation* and not *world-renunciation*. It is not the doctrine of 'world negation'—a phrase with which Dr. SCHWEITZER damns, the entire Advaita ethics.¹

Prof. HIRIYANNA has an interesting suggestion in this connection. He holds that *saṁnyāsa* as the fourth stage in the scheme of life is not of Upaniṣadic origin. It is not a stage at all. It is the transcendence of all *āśramas*. It is an end in itself and not a means.² It is surmised that *saṁnyāsa* as a fourth stage must have been a later innovation born out of the demands of the institutional phase of religion. It is not possible to assert this view conclusively, because of the presence of some passages in Upaniṣads that refer to formal *saṁnyāsa*.³

¹ For an answer to Dr. SCHWEITZER see S. RADHAKRISHNAN'S '*Eastern Religion and Western Thought*'—Chap. III. For a statement of SCHWEITZER, see his book, *Indian thought and its development*.

² *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* by Prof. HIRIYANNA, pp. 75 to 77. The term '*saṁnyāsa*' does not bear in the Upaniṣads its present significance of a stage in the spiritual formal ascent of man. It thus means only the transcending of the triple mode of *āśrama* life, and is regarded as a consequence of Brahman knowledge rather than as a means of attaining it.

³ See Chān. Up. II, 2, 3, 1. Br. IV, 4, 22. Jābāla, 4.

The practice of detachment in this positive sense is pictured well in the Upaniṣads; 'Two birds ever united companions cling to the self-same tree'. Of these two, one eats the sweet berry, the other looks on without eating'. The bird which looks on represents the right type of detachment, necessary for Brahman realisation. With the knowledge of Brahman gained through the scriptures the individual meditates on Brahman. This meditation is called *upāsana*. *Upāsana* is not the external ceremonial worship of the various gods conducted by the worldling, for well-being here and hereafter. It is a worship which transforms the worshipper into the very object he worships. The two stages of *upāsana* are :—(a) concentration and (b) sympathetic imagination. In the first process the mind is entirely abstracted from everything, except the object of meditation. In the second stage union with the object is experienced through sympathetic imagination. *Upāsana* leads to that "shattering experience wherein the individual withdraws his soul from all outward events, gathers in himself together inwardly and strives with concentration when there breaks upon him an experience, secret, strange and wondrous, which quickens within him, lays holds on him and becomes his very being." It is at this stage that the aspirant forgets the otherness of god and feels that he is not a banished stranger from god. He cries aloud 'I am Brahman'.¹ It is in this sense the Upaniṣadic passage 'he who knows Brahman becomes Brahman' has to be understood.

¹ Prof. HIRIYANNA'S translation of 'Bṛhadāraṇyaka' Upaniṣad, Vani Vilas Press, Introduction pp. 4, 5.

² Br. Upaniṣad I, 4. 10.

Brahman-realisation is the true discovery of personality. By the destruction of all that makes for difference the individual realises his true nature i. e., Brahman. The message of the Upaniṣads is 'He who *uniformly*' sees all beings in his self and his self in all beings does not feel repelled therefrom.¹ One who knows that all beings are verily identical with his own self has no delusions, knows no sorrow, but comes to realise with the strength of his entire being the great truth of the charter of Indian thought, *tat tvamasi*.

¹ Īśa 6 & 7.

CHAPTER VIII

The Bhagavad Gītā

The Bhagavad Gītā is the most popular Hindu scripture. Its importance is second to none in respect of Hindu philosophical doctrines. It is one of the triple texts (prasthānatraya) of vedānta. All the traditional ācāryas (Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva) have commented on it. Each has striven hard to prove that the doctrines of their respective schools are enshrined in the text of the Gītā. Modern Indian thinkers treat the Gītā as *the book* of Hinduism. Mahatma GANDHI regards the Gītā as the Universal mother. The Gītā, within the compass of its seven hundred verses gives us the quintessence of all the śāstras and the Upaniṣads. Mahatmaji says, 'I lost my mother, who gave me birth long ago; but this *eternal mother* has completely filled her place by my side, ever since. She has never changed, she has never failed me. When I am in difficulty or distress, I seek refuge in her bosom.' He concludes his estimate as follows :— 'I can declare that the Gītā is ever presenting me with fresh lessons; and if somebody tells me that it is my delusion, my reply to him would be, that I should hug this delusion, as my richest treasure'. The Gītā inculcates in us the duty of perseverance in the face of seeming failure. It teaches us that we have a right to action only, but not to the fruits thereof, and that success and failure are one and the same thing at the bottom. It calls upon us to dedicate our-

selves, body, mind and soul to pure duty, and not to become mental voluptuaries at the mercy of chance desires and undisciplined impulses¹.

Lokamānya TILAK in his monumental book, *The Gītā Rahasya*, points out "that in the literature of the whole world there is no book like the Gītā. It is the luminous and priceless gem. It gives peace to afflicted souls, it makes us masters of spiritual wisdom".

William von HUMBOLDT held the view that the Gītā is 'the most beautiful, perhaps, the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue'. Copious praise has been heaped on this poem. The revolutionary and the reactionary alike have claimed the Gītā as their gospel.

To what, is this popularity of the Gītā due? There must be something in it which time cannot destroy. Its universal appeal lies in the fact that it is fundamentally a book of religion. It is a theistic scripture. It posits the existence of an all-loving omnipotent God as being moved by the distress and ignorance of men. It is the layman's scripture. It does not insist on a hard discipline which only a select few can practise. The demands of the Gītā view of life are not exacting. It is within the reach of one and all of us.²

¹ Mahatma GANDHI has in all three important articles on the Gītā. They are:—*Young India* 12th November, 1925, *Young India* 6th August 1931 and *Address to the Benares Hindu University Students* 1934.

² The author of the Gītā takes note of the natural and biological make-up of men. The central message of the Gītā is the exposition of the method (yoga) as to how to keep the *sattva* element predominant in men. How to hold the *rajas* and the *tamas* in check. The Gītā gives a detailed scheme for keeping the *sattva* element predominant.

Its popularity is due to its form as well as its matter. It is a chapter from the *Bhīṣma Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*. The style of the poem is lucid and flowing. The dialogue form gives the whole poem a dramatic setting, and the two fascinating figures add to the beauty of the poem. The worth of the poem is due to its utterance by Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu.

Besides these formal excellences, the message of the *Gītā* has a universal appeal because it breathes the air of toleration. The toleration of the *Gītā* is not born of ease, indulgence in errors or indifference to the issues involved. 'It is not the intellectual's love of moderation nor the high-brow's dislike of dogma. It is not the politician's love of compromise—being all things to all men; nor is it the negative freedom from antipathies. It is an understanding insight, full trust in the basic reality.' Toleration is fundamental to Hinduism. It believes in the democratic principle that men grow differently and reach their best differently. It does not approve the sentiment that one man's god is another man's devil. It believes in the doctrine of *adhikāra* (eligibility). Each has his own law of development. There is no use in forcing one to pre-conceived patterns. There is such a thing as the *Law of Spiritual Progression* and we should not hasten the pace of one's spiritual development nor cut it to shape, or beat into a pattern. Such a process is against the law of human beings. This fact has been¹ amply illustrated in the *Gītā* doctrine of *svadharma*.

¹ Bernard SHAW points out that in this star-crossed world, Fate drives us all to find our chiefest good, not in *what we would*, but in *what we can*. "sve sve karmaṇyabhirataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhate narah" — *Gītā*, XVIII, 45.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says 'whoever with true devotion worships any Deity, in him I deepen that devotion; and through it he fulfills his desire.'¹ Kṛṣṇa asks the man of learning not to go and disturb the faith of one whose spiritual development is on a lower plane.² Thus the appeal of the Gītā is felt by everyone and in every walk of life.

Secondly its stress is eminently on life, more than on doctrines. Religion according to the author of the Gītā is ethics lived. 'It is more a way of life than a view of the life. Religion is behaviour and not mere belief.' It helps us to face the concrete problems of life and instructs us the manner in which we should do it. It reckons with the facts of life. It asks us to work with the material available here and now. It is a guide for the art of living. 'Life is the gift of Nature', but beautiful living is the gift of wisdom.' Such wisdom as is necessary for the beautiful living is the gift of the Gītā. It is concrete in its suggestions and helps us in practical life. The Gītā has showed the metaphysical problems to the background and focussed its attention on the philosophy of action. The Gītā does not discuss the subtleties of metaphysics as the Upaniṣads and the *vedānta sūtras*. It broadly lays down certain general principles which occur in the Upaniṣads and whose significance has been determined by the *vedānta sūtras*.³ A familiar verse compares the Gītā to the nectar-like milk. The Upaniṣads are compared to the cow, and Kṛṣṇa to the milk-man. Arjuna

¹ *Bhagavad Gītā* VII, 21.

² *Bhagavad Gītā* VI, 26. TOLSTOI was right when he pointed out, "How easy it is to confuse the desire to serve God, with the desire to draw a congregation."

³ *Bhagavad Gītā*, XVI-v-4. V-4.

is compared to a calf drinking of the milk, Gītā.¹ Further the colophon at the end of every chapter of the Gītā '*Bhagavad Gītāsu Upaniṣadsu*' is significant.

Though the Gītā lays great stress on the need for an unremitting moral life, yet its prime purpose is to help the individual to realise the spiritual experience of the fellowship with the Lord.

The Gītā is not a mere humanist gospel insisting on the sufficiency of human welfare. Service of humanity can never by itself take the place of God. The good life is not final. It is only a stepping stone to godly life. Religious experience i. e., fellowship with god is the vision and aim of the Gītā. It is not a mere humanitarian gospel advocating kindness to men and duty to society. Duty to society is no doubt enjoined on the individual but in serving society the individual is indirectly serving God². God is the centre of life. All activities must be harnessed to that end. *Īśvara prīti* is the final purpose of all action. The detachment which the Gītā teaches is not the doctrine of the stoics asking us to be fortified against allurements or afflictions. It is a detachment to the things of the world and an attachment to God.³ The

¹ *Gītā Māhātmya*.

² The Gītā and the Vedānta Philosophy point out that a really efficient moral life or a humanitarian creed is not possible; unless the individual feels that these values are sustained in reality in the universe. An unfriendly universe, a hostile environment, the short duration of life, and the postulate that there is nothing beyond the grave are not calculated to make men morally efficient. Without a positive faith in a moral order and a God life ceases to have meaning.

³ "Tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca"
Gītā VIII, 7.

Gītā as Prof. D. S. SARMA puts it, is a *yoga śāstra* and the teacher of the Gītā is a *yogeśvara* and the ideal is a *yogin* and the method of attaining it is *yoga*. It is above all a religious scripture urging men to have faith in God and do their duty according to His behests. The entire Gītā is treated by Mahatma GANDHI as an allegory and not as urging Arjuna to violence.¹ Prof. RADHAKRISHNAN points out that 'as the dialogue proceeds the dramatic element disappears. The echoes of the battle-field die away and we have only an inter-view between God and man. The chariot of war becomes the lonely cell of meditation and a corner of the battle-field where the voices of the world are stilled—a fit place for thoughts on the supreme.'²

The Gītā opens with a scene on the battle-field. Arjuna desires to have a view of all his opponents and so requests the divine charioteer to station his chariot in between the two contending armies. He was struck dumb by the ghastliness of the task before him. His limbs gave way, his mouth parched and his body trembled. His bow slipped from his hand and he experienced adverse omens. He resolved that he would not fight and in support of his resolve trotted out a few arguments common to pacifists.

His prime objection to fight was that it involved the killing of his own kinsmen, teachers, and men whom he loved most. Killing by itself is sin and it is more heinous if the victims are one's own teachers and kinsmen.

¹ The purport of the Gītā is not the injunction *tasmād yudhyasva* Bhārata, (ch. II, 18), but the injunction *yogī bhavārjuna* (ch. VI, v-46).

² S. RADHAKRISHNAN's *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 1, p. 521.

Arjuna emphatically states that he does not desire victory at the cost of the lives of his cousins. Like a *satyā-grahi* he states that it is better for him to be killed in war, unarmed and unresisting than to kill his own kith and kin. Further Arjuna pleads that the chances of victory are uncertain and are not helpful in urging him on to action.

As against all his words Lord Kṛṣṇa points out that the arguments of Arjuna are apparently ethical. A fundamental examination as the one that the *Gītā* undertakes dissolves all the doubts of Arjuna. The doubts of Arjuna are due to his uncritical acceptance of the things of the world. Kṛṣṇa argues that Arjuna's grief does not hold water at all. If Arjuna laments over the loss of his kinsmen, it is wrong to do so. The souls do not die. Death is only for the body. They have neither birth nor death. They exist for all times. They are eternal. It is the body that perishes and not the soul. 'Weapons cannot cleave the soul, fire does not burn him, water does not make him wet, wind does not dry him.'¹ Hence on the ground of the indestructibility of the soul, Kṛṣṇa points out that Arjuna's grief is meaningless. As for the destruction of the body it is its law. Being a compound of different elements, it is bound to decay. It is just like an instrument which goes out of order, after a specific period of time. Change of bodies is no more than change of clothes.² So, on that count Arjuna's grief makes no sense.

Arjuna is exhorted to fight the battle and not shirk his responsibilities. In waging the war Arjuna is only

¹ *Gītā*, chap. II, v. 24.

² *Ibid.* II, v. 22.

discharging the duties pertaining to his caste. If in the discharge of one's *sva-dharma*, sin accrues (as in the case of Arjuna), it does not bind or taint the soul of the doer with demerit (*pāpa*). It is not the act or consequence that is to be judged, but the motive. Arjuna is further told that the non-discharge of his duties would entail demerit as well as infamy. People would call into question even his military valour.

Arjuna is exhorted to discharge his duty however unpleasant, on the ground that salvation for an individual consists in treading one's path, *sva-dharma*. The philosophy of activism that the *Gītā* preaches is not the mechanical performance of any act. The *Gītā* says, 'what is work and what is not work even the wise are perplexed.'¹ It is the insistence of the performance of one's own duties prescribed by his station, in Prof. BRADLEY'S phrase 'my station, and my duty'—that is the fundamental message of the *Gītā*.

It is wrong to think that Arjuna was in any sense a genuine non-violent Gandhian. He was overcome by self-pity at the sight and the prospect of the death of his kinsmen in battle at his own hands. The sense that the war before him was a domestic war between the members of a same family depressed him. It is the fact of the sheer physical repulsion that led to Arjuna's fall from the roll of a courageous fighter to that of a man of compassion. The revolt of his ignorant and unregenerate emotions is cloaked by his words of apparent rationality. Kṛṣṇa pointed out that wisdom and true knowledge lend no support to his grief.

¹ *Gītā*, III, v. 16.

In the history of Hindu thought 'two paths to perfection are laid out. They are the *nivṛtti mārga* and the *pravṛtti mārga*. The ideal of *nivṛtti* advocates the giving up of all *karma* and withdrawing from the work-a-day world. This is the negative ideal of renunciation. According to Śāṅkara, the Gītā teaching has for its final purport renunciation. Mokṣa can be realised only by *jñāna*, and not by any other method, *nānyaḥ panthāḥ*. So the path of action at best can produce only further bondage, and bondage has the tendency to envelop the soul. Besides, *mokṣa* according to Śāṅkara, is not something to be produced, it is already there. So at best *karma* i. e., the path of active life can lead to *ātma śuddhi* cleansing of the heart and not directly to *mokṣa*. There are no two direct paths to *mokṣa*. The *pravṛtti* and the *nivṛtti mārgas* are not discontinuous. One leads on to the other. Further Śāṅkara explains the emphasis of the Gītā on *karma* in the light of Arjuna's eligibility for it. Arjuna needs the cleansing of the *ātman*; he is an unenlightened soul and as such he is only fit for *karma yoga*. Wherever the Gītā speaks of *karma yoga* in extravagant terms, it has to be understood in terms of the response to Arjuna's needs. It is in this light that all the Gītā verses in praise of *karma* are interpreted by Śāṅkara. He makes the path of works subservient to the path of renunciation.¹

With acute insight and massive erudition, and rare persuasive skill B. G. TILAK in his *Gītā rahasya* makes out a brilliant case for the philosophy of action. Taking the texts by and large, one gets the impression that the

¹ Dr. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN'S article 'The twofold path in the Gītā', *Philosophical Quarterly*, January 1941.

Gītā insists on the performance of action in a devout frame of mind.¹

Let us examine what the karma yoga of the *Gītā* is. It combines the excellences of the *pravṛtti* and the *nivṛtti mārgas*. It insists on the discharge of the social duties arising out of the station one occupies in life. Its stress is on a charter of duties and not a bill of rights. It never countenances dereliction from action, and condemns such lapses in unmitigated terms. The *Gītā* says 'no man can ever be free from a life of action by merely avoiding active work ; and no man can ever reach perfection through mere renunciation.'² For no man can sit still even for a moment, but does some work. Everyone is driven to act, in spite of himself by the impulses of nature.³ It is indeed impossible for any embodied being to abstain from work absolutely.⁴

Thus Lord Kṛṣṇa after making out a case for the impossibility of inaction goes on to describe the mental attitude with which one has to act. Act we must, and there is no escape from action.⁵ We are exhorted to renounce the fruit of the activity together with the sense of egoity. It is not action that is binding us, but the sense of attachment to the fruits of the action and the sense of agency. Every one of our activities must be construed as an offering at the feet of God. The karma

¹ B. G. TILAK'S *Gītā Rahasya*, Vol. I and author's article on the 'Message of the *Gītā*'—*Journal of Oriental Research* Vol. XIV, Part II.

² *Bhagavad Gītā*, Chap. III-v, 4. III-v. 5.

³ *Ibid.* Chap,

⁴ *Ibid.* Chap. XVIII-v. 11.

⁵ See TAGORE'S *Sādhana*, p. 78. "True freedom is not freedom from action, but freedom in action, which can only be attained in the work of love."

yoga of the *Gītā* has hit the golden mean between the two ideals of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* preserving the excellences of both the paths. While it does not abandon activity, it preserves the spirit of renunciation, 'work alone art thou entitled to, and not its fruits.' So never work for fruit, nor yet desist from work.¹ 'Know that what they call renunciation is the same as yoga. O ! Arjuna, for no one who has not renounced his desires can ever become a yogin.'² The *Gītā* takes every opportunity to point out that renunciation of any duty is not right. The abandonment of duty through ignorance is declared to be in the nature of tamasic souls.³ 'Works of sacrifice, gifts and penance should not be renounced but should be performed. For sacrifice, gifts and penance purify the mind ; these are works that should be done, is my decided and final view', says Kṛṣṇa.⁴ But he who gives up the fruit of work, is regarded as one who has renounced. The renunciation of the fruits of action and not action as such is the pith of the *Gītā* teaching. Such an action is tantamount to inaction. Hence the paradoxical verse in the *Gītā*, 'He who sees no work, in work, and work in inaction, he is wise among men, he is a yogin, and he has accomplished all his work.'⁵

III

Terms like *yajña* (sacrifice), *karma* (action), *jñāna* (knowledge), *saṁnyāsa* (renunciation) etc., are interpreted afresh by the *Gītā*. *Yajña* in the *Gītā* does not mean animal sacrifice, nor the sacrifice of material objects but

¹ *Bhagavad Gītā* Chap. II v. 47. ² *Ibid.* VI v. 2.

³ *Ibid.* XVIII v. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.* II vv. 5 & 6.

⁵ *Gītā* IV v. 18.

all activities prompted by a spirit of human service. *Karma* does not mean mere mechanical action done for the achievement of some objects here, or hereafter, but action performed without the desire for the fruits. The *jñāna* of the *Gītā* is not the intellectually mediated knowledge that does not result in spiritual realisation, but it is the immediate intuition which results in the spiritual experience of the fellow-ship with Lord. The *saṁnyāsa* of the *Gītā* is not the giving up of all activities as such and retiring from society. It is the giving up of the desire for the fruits and the sense of agency in actions. It is *phala saṁnyāsa* and not *karma saṁnyāsa*.¹

The Lord of the *Gītā* is fundamentally the supreme person, *Puruṣottama*. He is the abode of infinite number of auspicious attributes. His law is the law of love. Every action of the spiritual aspirant must be motivated to secure the pleasure of the Lord (*Īśvara prīti*). The Lord says, 'fly unto me for shelter.' In another place He says, 'Fix the mind on me, be devoted to me, prostrate thyself before me. So shalt thou come to me. I promise this truly for thou art dear to me.'²

¹ For a development of this view refer to Prof. D. S. SARMA's Introduction to the *Gītā* pp. 35 to 46.

See *Gītāñjali*, V 73.

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever Pourest for me the fresh draughts of thy wine of various colours and fragrance filling this earthen vessel to the brim. My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses.

The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.

Yes, all my illusions will be born into illumination of joy, and all desires ripen into fruits of love.

² *Gītā*, Chap. IX v. 34. See *Gītāñjali*, v. 36.

The author of the Gītā has no patience with men who merely believe in a world that is governed by action and reaction. He denounces the men who profess that 'this world is all that we see and all that is'. The talk of the impenitent rationalists is characterised as '*puṣpitām vācam*' (men who reel out florid texts).² These fools declare in the words of the Lord 'there is nothing else but this; the world is false and is without a moral basis and without a god, what is there that does not spring from mutual union? Lust is the cause of all.' 'Holding such views these souls commit cruel deeds, come forth as enemies for the destruction of the world. They give themselves up to insatiable desires, full of hypocrisy, pride and arrogance, they hold false views through delusion and act with impure resolves.'³

The author of the Gītā does not spare the literalists and materialists. The indiscriminate life of self indulgence sanctioned by the Hedonist is severely criticised. The Gītā stands for a careful cultivation of tastes and a controlled satisfaction of desires.

No appetite must be cheated and none over-fed. It condemns a life of asceticism. It stands for the training

¹ The impenitent scientist giddy with the success attained over material things displaces God by his egotism. Gītā XVI, 14. Man, proud man Dress'd in a little brief authority. Most ignorant of what he is most assured. His glassy essence, like an angry ape, Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven, as makes the angels weep; *Measure for Measure*. Act II, Sce. II.

² The Rationalist Prophet Montaigne observes " My reason is not framed to bend or stoop, my knees are."

³ *Bhagavad Gītā*, Chap. XVII, vv. 8 to 19.

The Gītā is opposed to the attitude: " I am the master of Balliol College, What I don't know is not knowledge . "

of instincts and not their thwarting. A harmonious integration of all the impulses is the call of the scripture, not the development of this or that aspect of life at the expense of the other.¹

The Gītā idea of *dharma* is not one of mere altruism. It rejects the mere efficient performance of rituals quite as much as it rejects a vague and indisciplined allegiance to God, as both inadequate in themselves. It bridges the gulf between Ritualism and Humanitarianism. It lays equal stress on faith and good works. Faith without active moral life is as vacuous and inadequate as a lofty moral idealism without faith in God. Faith in God should be the informing principle of all moral activity. The Gītā is not therefore a mere compendium of ethical precepts, but primarily a religious scripture, the central emphasis of which is on a loving Father of Mankind who is the goal of human aspiration. The morality of the Gītā is ultimately and intimately rooted in spirituality.²

1 See Lord Chesterfield's letter. "The sure characteristic of a strong and sound mind is to find in everything those certain bounds. These boundaries are marked out by a very fine line which only good sense and attention can discover, it is too much for vulgar eyes. In manners this line is good breeding, beyond it, is troublesome ceremony, short of it is unbecoming negligence and inattention. In morals it divides ostentatious Puritanism from criminal relaxation, in religion, superstition from impiety, and in short every virtue from its kindred vice and weakness".

See *Gītā*, CHAP. VI, 16 and 17.

2 See: S. RADHAKRISHNAN's essay in *The Cultural Problem* (Oxford Pamphlets on Indian affairs) No. I, p. 50.

"Dharma is not an unchanging moral code written for all times. It is an elastic tissue which clothes the growing body. If it is too tight it will give way and we shall have lawlessness, anarchy and revolution; if it is too loose it will trip us up and impede our movements." For a detailed discussion of the Hindu moral ideal See: P. S. Sivaswami IYER's *Kamala Lectures on "The Evolution of Hindu moral Ideals"* and Dr. MEES's *Dharma and Society*.

The moral teaching of the Gītā is not a static compound of prescriptions ready made for defined eventualities. It is a dynamic and a living call to every man to live always in the fear of the Lord and to order his life in accordance with his duty to himself and to society.¹ It is rigid neither in regard to time nor in regard to circumstances. The kingdom of Heaven is not conceived by the Gītā as a realm of pure mystical experience unconnected with concrete human relationships. It is not an unearthly conceptual realm but a just and a happy social order.

The message of the Gītā is universal, whatever may have been its origins. 'Its language, structure and the combination of balancing ideas, belong neither to the temper of the sectarian teacher, nor the spirit of a rigorous dogmatist. It is an undulating encircling movement of ideas, which is the manifestation of a vast synthetic mind. It is the richest synthesis of Indian culture, and not a weapon for dialectical warfare as the polemist commentators have made it out. It is a gate opening on the whole world of spiritual truth and experience and the view it gives us embraces all the provinces of the supreme region. It maps out, but does not cut out hedges to confine our vision.'

¹ See author's article on the 'Religion of the Gītā' *Journal of Madras University*, Vol. XI, No. 2.

² Śrī AUROBINDO, *Essays on the Gītā*, Vol. I, p. 10.

CHAPTER IX

The Vedānta-Sūtras

The Vedānta-sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa constitute one of the triple texts (prasthānatraya) of all the schools of vedānta. The sūtra literature is a very ancient literary mode and it is common to all the systems of philosophy in India. Its function is to reduce to the form of aphorisms and to present in a precise manner, the philosophical tenets of a system found scattered in a number of works. The sūtras are terse to the point of unintelligibility. They are concise to an excess. This gnomic nature of the sūtras renders them ununderstandable except with the aid of clear and elaborate commentaries. This has led to the writing of commentaries, subcommentaries and independent studies of the particular topics of a system (prakaraṇas).

It is laid down that the composition of the sūtras should satisfy a number of requirements.¹ First among them is that the sūtras must use short words with few letters. The words must be clear and unambiguous. They must be full of significance. The principles of interpretation forged by the sūtras must be comprehensive and not have a narrow or limited field of application. Meaningless syllables used in vedic verses to satisfy the metrical requirements must be avoided in the sūtras. In short, they should not suffer from any defect, formal or material.

¹ Alpākṣaram asaṇḍigdham sāravat, viśvatomukham astobhyam anavadyam ca sūtram sūtravido viduḥ.

The vedānta sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa are called by different names, *Brahma sūtras*, *Śārīraka sūtras*, *Uttara Mīmāṃsā sūtras* etc. Bādarāyaṇa is identified by the theistic schools of vedānta with one of the incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu i. e., the sage Vyāsa the celebrated author of the Mahābhārata and the eighteen purāṇas. Others identify him as one of the ṛṣis of ancient India. The vedānta sūtras are five hundred and thirty-five in number according to the calculation of Śaṅkara. Madhva holds the view that the number is five hundred and sixty-four. The vedānta sūtras mark the second stage in the development of vedāntic thought. The first stage is the intuition of the Upaniṣadic seers set forth in the Upaniṣads. The conflicting statements of the various texts of the Upaniṣads are properly adjudged and unified in the vedānta sūtras. This is the second stage i. e., the stage of systematisation. The co-ordination of the several passages is effected through the subordination of them under a passage of primary importance. Hence it is called a *nirṇāyaka śāstra*.

The third stage in the development of vedāntic thought is the writing of commentaries on the sūtras by the different system builders. The sūtras have been commented on by different ācāryas. Prominent among the commentaries are those of Śaṅkara, Bhāskara, Yādava-prakāśa, Rāmānuja, Keśava, Nīlakaṇṭha, Madhva, Bala-deva, Vallabha, Vijñānabhikṣu etc. The oldest of the commentaries is that of Śaṅkara. Its antiquity, its powers of argumentation, its metaphysical acumen and literary grace have all given it a unique status among the commentaries. It is at once a philosophical classic and a piece of great literature. The commentaries of

Rāmānuja and Madhva interpret the sūtras in a theistic light. The commentary of Madhva effects the textual synthesis in a masterly manner. His commentary has none of the literary grace of Śaṅkara. It is irritatingly brief. In support of his position he quotes passages copiously from the vedas and purāṇas. In fact there are very few sentences of his own in Madhva's commentary. The cogent array of quotations from the vast field of purāṇa literature is an index of his sense of loyalty to the śruti. Rāmānuja's commentary is argumentative and is hard reading. He gives us ample evidence of his logical skill. He points out that his commentary is not all his own and that in its main outline it is the resuscitation of a lost tradition. Such humility is evident throughout in his writings. Madhva asserts that his interpretation is infallible on the ground that the Lord himself, the very composer of the sūtras, Vyāsa, taught him its meaning and approved of his commentary. Two distinct trends of interpretation of the sūtras are clearly discernible, the absolutistic interpretation and the theistic interpretation. The former is represented by Śaṅkara and the latter by Rāmānuja and Madhva.

II

The vedānta sūtras are divided into four chapters. The first deals with the harmonisation of the purport of the different vedic and secular words in respect of Brahman, i. e. the *Samanvaya adhyāya*. The second chapter refutes the śrutis and other pramāṇas that contradict the central purport of vedānta and examines the arguments of the different systems that are opposed to vedānta

avirodha adhyāya. The third chapter relates to the way of attaining Brahman, hence it is called *sādhana adhyāya*. The fourth deals about the nature of bliss i. e., Brahman-realisation, hence it is called *phala adhyāya*. The sūtras in each chapter are classified into *adhikaraṇas*. Every topic is termed an *adhikaraṇa*. Some contain one sūtra, others as many as ten. Each *adhikaraṇa* refers to a particular scriptural passage which is called in technical parlance *viśaya-vākya*.

Some modern scholars are of opinion that Bādarāyaṇa was one of the many systematisers of vedānta. Bādarāyaṇa himself mentions the names of Bādari Kāśakṛtsna, Āśmarathya, Auḍulomi, Jaimini etc. These seers differ among themselves on many important points. The nature of the released soul is described by Auḍulomi as characterised by thought (*caitanya*) and Jaimini holds the view that a number of other attributes too characterise the liberated soul. Bādarāyaṇa admits both the positions.¹ With reference to the attainment of Brahman, Jaimini holds the view that the individual who worships the *Lower Brahman* does not attain the Higher *nirguṇa Brahman*. The sage Bādari takes exception to this view. Śaṅkara agrees with Bādari.² In the determination of the relation between Brahman and the individual soul, sage Āśmarathya is of opinion that as between Brahman and the individual soul identity-in-difference (*bhedābheda*) persists. Auḍulomi is of opinion that the individual soul is different from Brahman till the time of release. Sage

¹ Vedānta sūtras, Chap. IV. pāda i Sūtras 5-7.

² Ibid. Chap. IV. pāda iii Sūtra 7-14.

Kāśakṛtsna affirms the relation of identity between them.¹ These facts point out that there were others differing from Bādarāyaṇa on many topics even while he composed the sūtras. It is interesting to note here that Madhva in his commentary reconciles all the views that are opposed to Bādarāyaṇa's stand-point. The different views expressed are treated as particular aspects of the large view of Vyāsa.

III

The first four sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa give us in brief the outlines of the vedānta philosophy. In the first sūtra the spiritual aspirant is exhorted to inquire into the nature of Brahman. Brahman is defined in the second sūtra as the originator, sustainer, destroyer, etc., of the Universe. The third sūtra states that scripture is the pramāṇa in respect of the knowledge of Brahman. The fourth points out that all the terms in the scripture signify Brahman.

Before commenting straight on the first sūtra Śaṅkara gives us a short *prolegomena to metaphysics*, in his famous *adhyāsa bhāṣya*, which is an introduction to the vedānta sūtras in general and to the first sūtra in particular. According to Śaṅkara there is only one reality, which is Knowledge, Bliss, and Infinitude. Besides this Reality there is nothing real. The real and Brahman are one and the same. There is nothing besides it with which to describe it. Hence the impossibility in describing Brahman.

If Brahman is all that is Real, how is it that we see a world of plurality in its place. It is to explain this

¹ Ibid. Chap. i. pāda. iv, sūtra, 20-22.

mystery that Śaṅkara wrote his *adhyāsa bhāṣya*. We human beings have a natural tendency to identify the inert with self and the self with the inert, e. g., the usage 'this is my house' etc. bears out this truth. We identify the *anātman* with the *ātman* and the *ātman* with the *anātman*. This reciprocal superimposition (*māyā*) sustains the world of plurality. This faculty or superimposition is called *avidyā*, i. e. (nescience). It is beginningless, positive, and is attached to the individual soul. This faculty is responsible for the principle of individuation. This nescience suppresses Brahman and projects in its place the world of plurality. This is explained on the famous analogy of the individual delusively cognising the rope as the snake in twilight. The rope did not get transformed into the snake, it only appeared so. Likewise Brahman appears as it were, many (*vivarta* and not *pariṇāma*) and does not really get transformed into the many. The world of plurality persists as long as nescience is there. The individual thinks that he is one of the many, suffering untold miseries. This is due to the functioning of nescience. Nescience can be removed only by knowledge, and the knowledge must be of that which is destructive of nescience. Hence the necessity to know Brahman, the only real. So the *sūtrakāra* exhorts the spiritual aspirant to inquire into Brahman, after systematic ethical discipline. Brahman knowledge will help us to destroy the nescience and realise that the individual ego is no other than Brahman when freed from its limitations.

If Brahman is to be known, he can only be known through his attributes. The second *sūtra* defines Brahman as the originator, sustainer and destroyer of this uni-

verse. This description apparently contradicts Śaṅkara's metaphysical position. Śaṅkara treats this account of the Sūtrakāra as a description *per-accidence*. Hence Brahman is not in any literal sense the actual creator of the world. He is said to be the abhinna nimitta *upādāna-kāraṇa* of the universe.

Nescience has to be destroyed through Brahman experience. Scripture is the ultimate authority in respect of Brahman. The third sūtra states that Brahman is the cause of the sacred scripture. Such great wisdom as the vedas contain could not have originated from any individual who is not omniscient. This sūtra is interpreted in another way. The scriptures are the pramāṇas through which we have mediate cognition of Brahman.

The fourth sūtra effects an harmonisation of all vedic terms with Brahman.

IV

The theistic schools interpret the vedānta sūtras in an entirely different manner from that of Śaṅkara. The God of the sūtras is not an indeterminate entity that cannot be described in terms of any attribute. He is a suprapersonal being endowed with infinite powers and omniscience. He is referred to in the second sūtra as the creator and sustainer of this Universe. The world of plurality is not conceived by the theists as an illusory phenomenon or on the same level as dream experience. A real and an omnipotent God cannot by his very nature have created an illusory world. If the world of plurality is an illusory manifestation of the Lord, He is no better than a juggler who draws rabbits from his hat. The philosophical position that the world of reality is an illusory

manifestation militates against the omnipotence of the Lord.

The theist criticises the view that the Lord described in the scriptures is not Brahman but the limited aspect of Brahman i. e. the personal God *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* in advaita parlance is called *Saguṇa Brahman* and the indeterminable secondless reality is called *Para Brahman*. The Advaitin holds that all the attributes that speak of Brahman as creator, sustainer etc. of this Universe refer to the *saguṇa Brahman*. According to some such an interpretation makes the august work of the *sūtrakāra* a juvenile production. 'It is impossible to conceive that the *sūtras* should open with an imperative order asking the spiritual aspirant to enquire into the *Para Brahman*, and define in the very second *sūtra* the *Saguṇa Brahman*'. The Advaitin's contention that Brahman is indeterminable in terms of any word results in the futility of the *śāstras*. If it be contended that the *śāstras* signify the Lord in a secondary sense (*Lakṣaṇāvṛtti*), the theist replies that it is impossible to imagine a secondary signification of a thing that cannot be described in terms of any word. In so far as no description of Brahman is given by the Advaitin it is equated with the *śūnya* of the Buddhist.¹

The theists criticise Śaṅkara's doctrine of *māyā* and point out that the author of the *sūtra* does not intend it at all. It is stated in the *sūtra Jagadvyāpāra varjyam* certain functions like the creation of the cosmos are denied to the released soul. They are said to be the inalienable functions of the Lord distinguishing Him from the souls. Further the description of the world as something other than the real and the unreal is said to

¹ *Vedānta sūtra* IV, 4, 17.

violate the sound canons of logic. A thing is either real or unreal. There is no middle ground between the real and the unreal. Śaṅkara's introduction to his commentary on the vedānta sūtras is criticised as not being in tune with the sūtras. The concept of *mokṣa* explained in the sūtras does not admit of the identity of the individual soul with Brahman. The theists hold the view that anybody who reads Śaṅkara's commentary with open eyes, will see the liberties he has taken with sūtras, and the occasions on which he throws them overboard or tells us in parenthesis not to take them too seriously.

The theists contend that the sūtras are not in favour of the final merging of the individual in Brahman. Most of the sūtras speak of the difference of the Lord from Brahman. They have all been mostly interpreted by Śaṅkara as having difference for their purport. There is the significant sūtra² in which Brahman is declared to be the *one approached by all the released*. The general impression left by the sūtras is that they are theistic to the core. All the difficulties felt by the different *ācāryas* in their task of interpreting and reconciling the different passages arise out of an attempt to build logical systems of thought. No system can effect a harmony between all the passages of the Upaniṣads which are the expressions of the religious experience of different seers at different levels.

¹ Ibid 'muktopaśrpyavyapadeśāt' 1, 3, 2.

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